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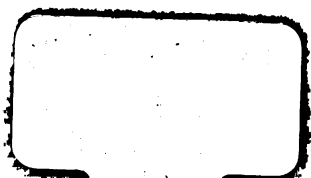


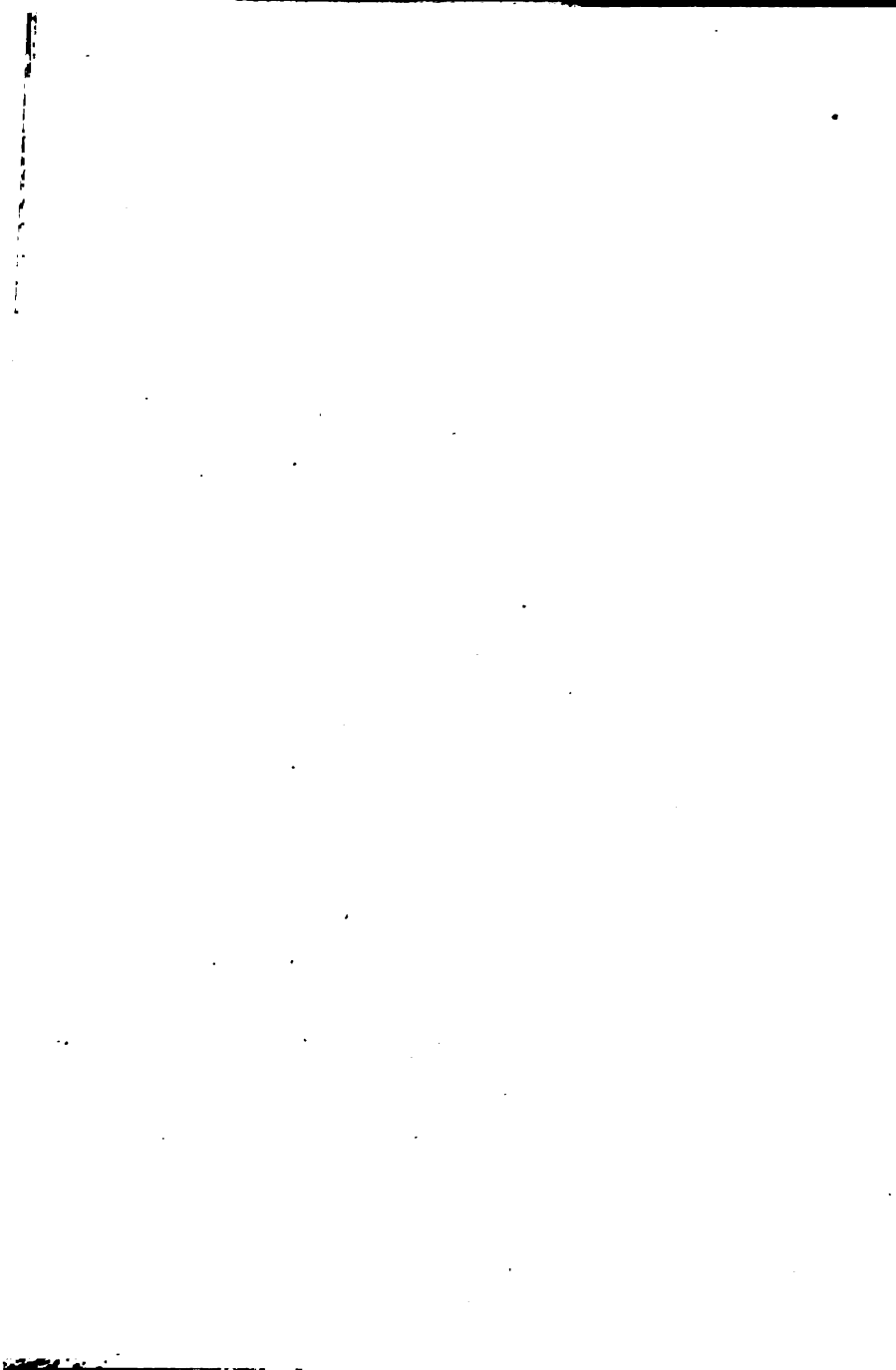
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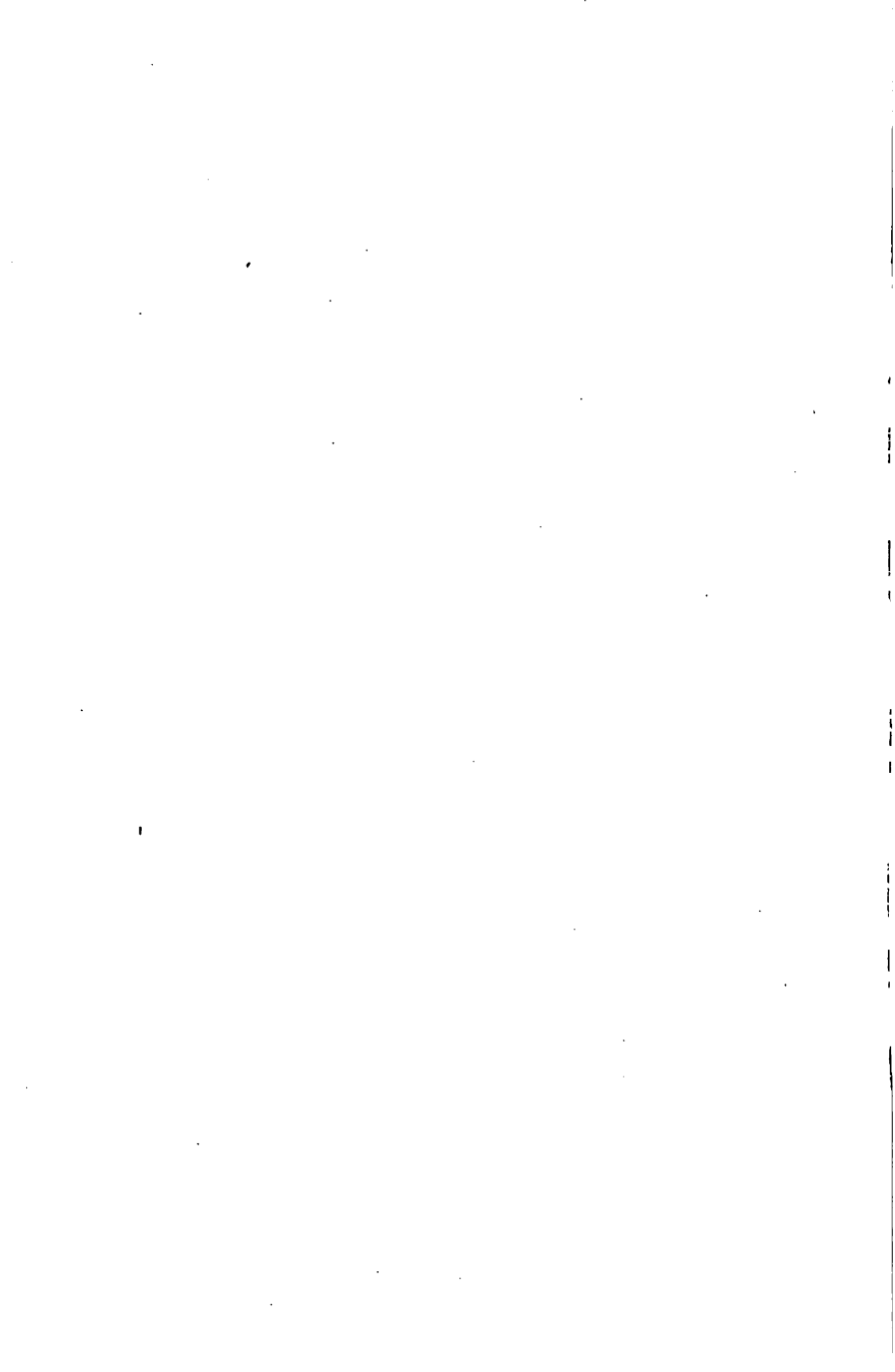
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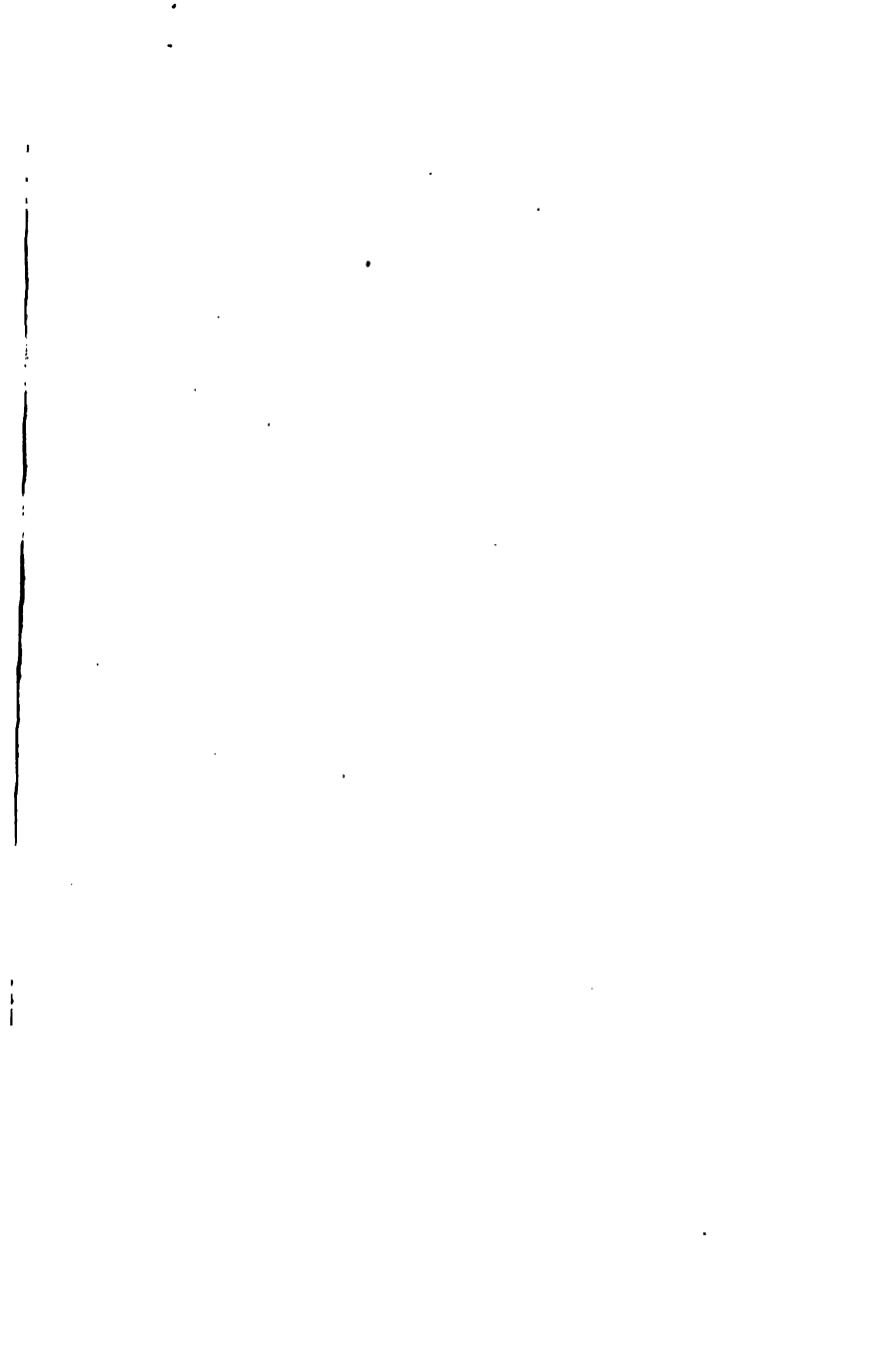
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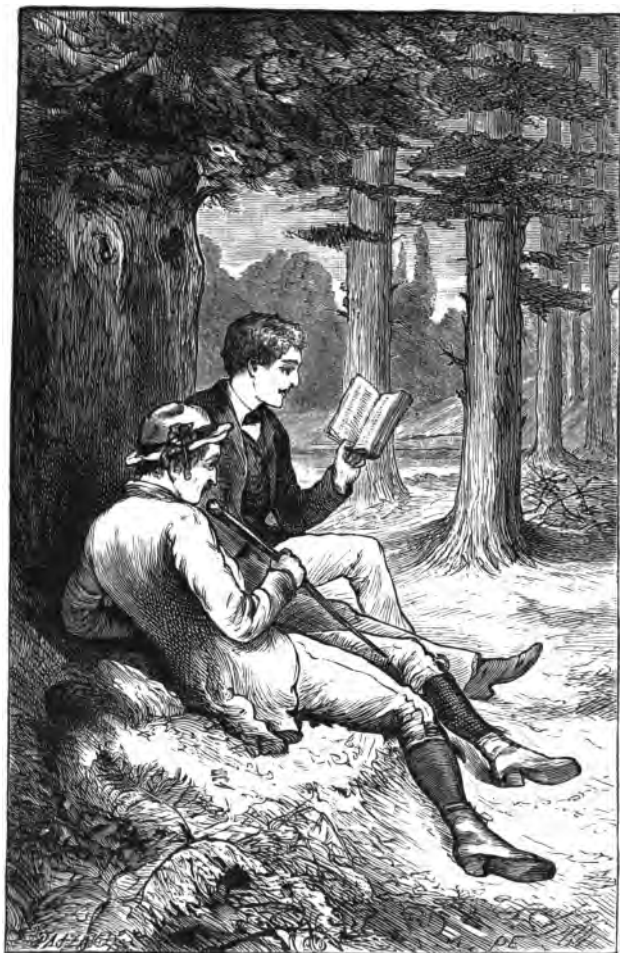
"GUY FOWERS' WATCHWORD"











THE TEMPLE IN THE WOOD.





READY AND WILLING.



SETTING UP THE GRAPE-POSTS.

Page 131.

Thomas Nelson and Sons,
LONDON, EDINBURGH, AND NEW YORK.



READY AND WILLING;

OR,

Guy Powers' Watchword.

By

J. T. HOPKINS.

"Leaning on Thee, with child-like faith,
To Thee the future I confide;
Each step in life's untrodden path
Thy love will guide."

ELLIOTT.

London:

T. NELSON AND SONS, PATERNOSTER ROW.
EDINBURGH; AND NEW YORK.

1885.

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READY AND WILLING.

CHAPTER I.

THE WEST-SIDE DOOR.

THE great brass knocker of the Hollowbloom side-door lifted and fell again with a loud double rap of its great shining fist. Not the commonplace rap of some one who could wait as well as not, or who even begged pardon for intruding at all; there was a triumphant *whang* in the echo, as if a goal had been reached, and as if something of importance had been brought by the one who applied for admittance.

A light step crossed the room within, and a half-turned blind allowed a bright dark eye to sweep for one instant across the broad flagstone before the door.

The sweep took in the fringe of grass that bordered the stone, a stray trumpet-flower that had dropped from the vine above, and a pair of heavy winter

moccasins, over which swung the hems of wide linen trousers bleached nearly white, while a hand muffled in a shaggy gray mitten bent to pick up the crimson flower.

"Oh, it's Drake, poor fellow;" and in another moment the door swung open, bringing the completion of the costume into view—a blue cardigan jacket with heavy stripes of red, and a sharp-peaked straw hat, with ribbon fluttering behind.

An eager face, shaded by lank black hair, looked out from under the hat, while one hand crumpled something with a watchful grasp.

"Here, Miss Hollowbloom. Here, Miss Cly. They had this waiting for you, but I made 'em give it up. I said I'd bring it down myself. I brought it down myself, you see, because—;" and the imbecile glanced furtively over his shoulder and lowered his voice—"it's one of the evil days to-day—it's one of the evil days;" and he thrust a square, important-looking letter into Miss Hollowbloom's hand.

It touched her with a brush of the gray mitten and a thrill of half-recollection at once. When had she seen that handwriting before?

"Yes," went on Drake eagerly, mistaking her thought; "how could *I* tell whether the boys would look in at the mail to-day? They might not look in at all, and such a thing as a letter is safer at home, Miss Cly. And you did me a good turn once, you know. You did me a good turn once."

Miss Hollowbloom recovered herself to give Drake the thanks he was waiting for.

"You are very good," she said, "very good. The letter is much better here. And so it is a day of trouble once more, is it, Drake?"

Drake answered with one or two sharp nods that shook his black hair and made the hat-ribbon flutter afresh; and then, as if the hidden soul suddenly looked out, a gleam lighted his face, and he broke into a rich ringing laugh that echoed against the old chestnut-trees at the gate.

"But they couldn't compass it, Miss Cly. They couldn't compass it, and they *never will*. I came off conqueror, and brought the old bag safe through once more!" And with another peal of laughter, Drake turned and disappeared under the trees, his arms waving victoriously over his head.

"It is time for that stupid trick to wear out," the lady said. "Whenever the spirit of mischief seizes man or boy in this town, the one glorious vent for it is to make that poor faithful fellow think they are going to rob him of his mail;" and then her eyes came back with a quick flash to the missive he had brought. She passed one swift glance from corner to corner of its envelope, and then went back into the sitting-room, and closed the door.

Miss Hollowbloom, or Miss Cly, as she was generally called—Clytemnestra being rather long and lofty for every-day use—was not given to losing time

when a thing was to done. With a quick turn of the blind for a better light, she seated herself in her high-backed rocking-chair, and with a thrust of her paper-knife opened the letter and drew it out.

One glance at the date was enough. She saw from whom it had come. But what was that yellowed, half-crumpled note that fell with a faint perfume from the inside page?

For a moment Miss Hollowbloom let it lie where it had dropped in her lap; then with a strange feeling, as if she were touching some mysterious thing, she took it up, opened it, and with a start, and a strange light in her eyes, read and reread the few faint lines before she turned to the larger sheet.

For the next half-hour Miss Hollowbloom sat with varying expressions chasing each other over her face; a strange, yearning look of tenderness, then grief, regret, then perplexity, and resolution, and dismay. Over and over again one followed the other, while she sometimes started up and walked about the room, and then returned to her seat, her large brilliant eyes—real Hollowbloom eyes—first melting with tenderness and then shining with determination, as they rested on the faded note.

At last determination seemed to mount uppermost; she let the papers fall again into her lap, and folded her hands firmly over them as they lay. But determination evidently brought dismay in its

train, and that feeling broke from her lips at last in the exclamation,—

"Another boy!"

The words dropped slowly, one syllable at a time, and then the tall clock that had stood in the corner ever since the first Hollowbloom's day, ticked another quarter of an hour away before she spoke again.

"Another boy in the Hollowbloom house! Another for me to bring up, and before I have the two that belong to me fairly off my hands!"

Silence fell again, and the sun crept away from the flagstone and disappeared round the corner of the house. Suddenly Miss Cly started to her feet, and throwing the blind open wide, looked anxiously under the chestnut boughs and over the winding road down which Drake had disappeared.

"I wish the boys would come home," she said impatiently. "It is getting late."

CHAPTER II.

THE HOLLOWBLOOM HOUSE.

THE Hollowbloom house was one of the stateliest mansions that the little town of Bolingbroke could boast. It stood on a rise of land, just where the road, when a half-worn track to the next town, had struck into a heavy old chestnut-grove; now the road was a solid highway, macadamized, toll-gated, and the pride of the country round about. But a few of the old chestnuts still stood sentinels against the house, while the two that the first Hollowbloom had planted by the gate, striplings from the old grove, spread their branches as wide and towered as high as any ancestor time had spared.

The first Hollowbloom had had a good many queer notions of his own, his neighbours said, and though two or three generations had passed since then, it was still the opinion of some people that all the Hollowblooms were alike. They certainly lived along in very much the same way; with the same heavy wainscotting and fluted friezes round the stately old rooms; the same tall clock with a

moon on its face and a gilt eagle at the top, ticking silently in its place; and the same brass knockers at the doors—the larger of these, a broad, jocund face, with the handle piercing its brows, looking steadily out at the front, while the heavy fist that Drake had lifted glittered on the more modest west side.

The brass face, beaming though it was, did not welcome very frequent visitors. The great front-door, with its carved portals and fluted sides, was hardly ever opened except on rare and important occasions; it was the side-door, with its pillared portico and old trumpet-flower vine, to which everybody came, and towards it Miss Cly, apparently dissatisfied with the view that the window gave, now moved restlessly. She stepped out upon the flagstone where Drake had stood, and shading her face with her hand, looked through a gap in the trees that gave a more distant stretch.

But still no one came in sight, and as the sun dropped still lower in the sky a half-perceptible mist began to rise in the valley beyond.

“Those boys ought to be here,” said Miss Cly again. “It never does suit Tom to be out after a fog comes up.”

She passed in again towards the sitting-room, closing the door behind her as she went. The latch was not quite pressed in, and it sprang open again with a little sound. She turned her head and saw it, and saw also a branch of the old vine tossed

through by a passing breeze. She threw it out hastily, then drew it as quickly in again, and held it a moment with a hardly visible trembling in her hand; then dropping it, she left it where it was, and went back to her chair, with a sound that in any one but a Hollowbloom would have been thought sufficiently like a sob.

Apparently the letter, and the anxious watching and the stray vine-branch all had some close connection; but what Miss Cly thought and felt was almost always a secret of her own, and as far as the bit of trumpet-vine was concerned, no human being but herself had the slightest clue to the tale that it whispered.

If the clue had once been given, though, a part at least of the story could easily have been told, for there was not a neighbour or a gossip in Bolingbroke but knew it from beginning to end. In fact, at that very moment it was being rehearsed, for the fiftieth time, in the kitchen at the end of the long stoop that ran out from the main part of the house.

"Yes, there's a good many queer things might be said about the Hollowblooms," went on a rather high-pitched voice; "and one of the queerest of 'em all is as how Miss Cly was the first girl of the name ever born in the old house since the day it was built. I've seen two first-born sons step in and take the old place as they fell heir to it; and there's older men than I can tell you of a third one

before 'em. That's four generations hand running, and not a single change off till it came to Miss Cly, though there was boys enough before her and after her in the old Squire's day. A wonderful queer thing, *I* say, and no prospect of anything more to come to pass, one way or the other, for there hasn't been a wedding in the house for many a day, nor isn't like to be, as I can see. It's few thoughts the boys that are left seem to give to marrying yet, no more than if they were infants; and as for Miss Cly, it's a rare pity; but I suppose there was never the man as dared to ask;" and a thin, quavering laugh finished the remark.

The person to whom it was addressed did not reply; her attention seemed absorbed in the contents of a steaming kettle from which she was just lifting the lid, and the speaker continued,—

"And then, as if the queer luck must go on, there was all that trouble she had with little Miss Nell. Dear land of liberty! It looks like only yesterday, but it is near sixteen years ago. I was counting them up only the other day, and they took the five fingers of both hands, and the first hand over again the second time, and one finger of the other hand—sixteen good years this coming fall since she went out of the house; twenty years old she was, and I suppose never a word about her has come into it since. And 'twas ten years before that, to a day, that I brought her here myself—drove her to the

door with old Blackhawk to the Squire's shay. As pretty a lassie she was as ever this village felt step on its streets. Only Mr. Guy's child, to be sure—only Mr. Guy, that the Squire had driven away for being as high-headed as himself, and that left Mr. Roger oldest son again by dying. But I saw how things went with my own eyes. I saw how Miss Cly caught her up and held her till she nigh took the child's breath, the first moment she stepped over the threshold of the door. And I kept the run of things all the way on after that. I saw how it cut Miss Cly to the heart when she ran away at last, and left her only the boys again that she'd had worry enough with before, and has still; though, as I was saying, 'twill be the wonderfulest thing of all if there's a day to be when there's not another boy coming into the name. But it cut her to the heart; didn't it now, Mistress Abigail? Eh, didn't it now? Or haven't you a word to say this afternoon?"

"Mistress Abigail," if so Nabby Granger, the faithful guardian for thirty-five years of the Hollowbloom kitchen, should be called, placed the lid firmly over her kettle, and crossing her arms, turned with a withering look.

"Yes, Adam Gorringer, I *have* something to say; and that is, that it's a very poor sound coming from you or any of the rest of us, to take such a choice of words as to talk of Miss Nelly running away! She measured her strength with Miss Cly about a

thing as she wanted her own way about, and as they never chose to tell any of us what it was; and you know as well as I do, that no Hollowbloom ever gave up, and that's all as is to be said about it. Nor I don't see as the family paying you wages for thirty years past is any reason why you should say any more, nor that you shouldn't talk of 'the young gentlemen' instead of 'the boys,' nor be waking up the family bygones to talk over, when there's plenty of work waiting for you outside the door."

Adam rose and shook himself with a helplessly indignant look. Nabby's remarks were exceedingly distasteful in their tone, but experience had long ago taught him that to retreat was his safest course when she commenced attack.

"It may be all that's to be said, Mistress Abigail, and it may be you've heard the boys called anything else hereabout; but as for knowing, I tell you again, *I* know it cut Miss Cly to the heart, and she's never been the same since, what is more, proud as she looks. *I* know, I say. I've seen things in my day. *I* know!" and Adam moved stiffly off, muttering his last words over to himself as he went.

Adam did know a good deal, it is true, but he did not know that on that morning nearly sixteen years ago, "when Miss Cly came down," the west-side door, where Nelly had gone out, stood ajar, and a branch of the trumpet-vine lay wandering in at the crack, and Miss Cly had never seen it happen again

till to-day. And Adam did not know she was looking, the very moment he spoke, at something else she had never seen from that day to this—the handwriting of the note she still held in her hand, and its signature, “Your own poor Nell.”

CHAPTER III.

THE HOLLOWBLOOM BOYS.

As Adam's step ground over the gravel towards the work that Nabby suggested was waiting for him, another sound came faintly in from the road down which Miss Cly had been gazing just before. It drew nearer, and in another moment a light waggon came in sight, driving rapidly towards the house. Miss Cly's boys were coming at last.

The waggon whirled up to the door, and Miss Cly met it there with the restless look still in her face.

"I am glad you have come, boys," she said. "It is very late."

"Late? Oh no. What are you thinking of?" responded a cheery voice, and a strong, well-built man, with threads of gray just appearing in the crisp curls at his temples, put the reins into his companion's hands.

"But look at the fog, Tom. And I expected you at three. It is only a ten-miles' drive."

"That's true, but it seemed as if we couldn't get

off. I meant to start an hour before.—Just take Shanter round to the stable, won't you, Roger?"

"Where's Adam?" was the response; and Roger, whose close-cut hair showed even a thicker sprinkling of gray than his brother's, sat still with a very unacquiescent look on his smooth-shaved, florid face.

"Oh, never mind, then. I'll take him myself directly. I want to look into the house a moment first."

"But you know the creature won't stand.—Hey, there! Hold still!" said Roger, tightening the rein on the horse, which stood with distended nostrils, impatiently pawing, and striking sparks from the driveway stones.

"That's right. Just hold him a moment, and I'll be there;" and Tom disappeared into the house.

"As if we didn't all know what his minutes mean," muttered Roger, with an annoyed glance over his shoulder. "Where's that fellow Adam? Can any one tell?"

"Give me the reins, and I'll take him myself," said Miss Cly, whose eyes began to grow bright.

"You? Nonsense."

Fortunately at this moment Adam's stooping, square shoulders came in sight around the corner of the stoop. Roger sprang out, Adam took his seat, and with a thin, sharp whinny, Shanter half reared, struck the air once or twice with his delicate hoof,

and then coming gently down, sped towards the stable-door.

Nabby's housekeeping instincts always seemed to meet the exact moment that brought travellers home, and the savoury dish that had kept her back so long turned upon Adam was steaming already on the table, with tempting whiffs stealing out from under an old silver cover, and Miss Cly and Roger were waiting to take their seats, before Tom came bustling back to the side-door.

"Now, then, I'll take the creature," he announced; but the road was clear, and the clatter of hoofs came back from the stable-floor as Shanter curvetted under Adam's brush.

With a little start of surprise, he turned and entered the dining-room. "So you didn't wait after all! Why couldn't you hold on a minute for a man?" he asked in the same cheery tones that had answered Miss Cly before.

"Wait!" echoed Roger, with a half growl. "We've done waiting enough, if that is all. Don't you see supper's on the table now?"

"Yes, yes, I see. I'll be there. Let me just step upstairs one moment first."

"We'll let you do nothing of the kind. Come along and eat your supper like a man." And Roger laid a hand that was encouraging, to say the least, on his brother's shoulder.

"Come, boys," said Miss Cly quietly; and with

a wry face Tom sat down, and divided his attention between Nabby's dish and a running account of his afternoon's drive. But he had not a very good listener in Miss Cly. The letter Drake had brought seemed burning in her pocket. Would tea never be over, and the right moment for speaking of it come? Not until everything was quiet, at least. She could never talk of it till the boys should get settled down.

"What's the matter with you, Cly?" asked Tom at last, as he caught the impatient look in her eyes; but at that moment Nabby came in with a great branching candlestick, which she placed in the centre of the table, while she proceeded to take the tea-things away, and then, at a sign from Miss Cly, touched a light to the fire already laid upon the hearth. The fog had wrapped quite around the house, and the twilight was chilly and damp. The fire cracked and curled and flickered back from the old brass andirons, and Roger opened his newspaper and shook it out.

"I'll sit here and read awhile, since you make it so tempting," he said. "This is all the mail brought to-day—no letter at all."

"Yes," said Miss Cly quietly. "There was a letter. I have it here."

Roger stopped, with his paper half-turned, and gave her a quick, inquiring glance, and Tom looked up from the greyhound he was petting at his side.

"A letter? How did it come here?"

"Drake brought it. They had been frightening him again with that silly pretence of trying to take his mail, and it always fills his head with notions when they do that;" and Miss Cly laid the letter and the note upon the table, pushing them a little towards Roger, where he sat.

He reached out for them, when she drew them hastily back, half covering the note with one hand.

"Wait a moment, boys," she said, with a strange sound in her voice; "wait till I tell you what it says."

She hesitated again, and then, as if she would have it over, went on hastily. "This is one from Nelly, written to me."

The half-opened paper almost fell from Roger's hand, and Tom sprang up with a suddenness that sent Troy under the table with a whimper of dismay. It was over fifteen years since that name had been spoken in the house, and five years since Roger, as oldest son, had received a letter stating that Nelly was dead. And now was Miss Cly talking of ghosts?

But there was the bit of paper that no ghost could ever have sent.—Roger stretched out his hand again.

"Hush, boys. Wait. I'll tell you. This"—and Miss Cly touched the letter with a white, well-formed finger, that wore an old Hollowbloom ring—"this is from a lawyer where she lived; the same one who wrote to you, Roger, five years ago. This time he writes to say that her husband—the man who stole her from us—is gone too, and that in looking over

his papers and effects this note in Nelly's hand was found, written on almost the last day of her life—written with a dying request to us; and *that man*”—and a flash came into Miss Cly's black eyes—“*that man* has dared to keep it back all this time.”

There was silence a moment, and then Tom's voice broke it in a lowered tone. “Poor little Nell! And what did she want, then, that we could have done?”

Miss Cly uncovered the note and passed it to his side of the table. He took it with a strange feeling, as he touched a message from one so long lost, drew the candles nearer, and read,—

“*Dear, dear Aunt Cly!* I have loved you so much all this time. But I could not come to you—that I *could* not do—and how could I make you believe in my love, if I never came? And now I am going further—oh, so much further away. I can never, never come now; never hear you say what I have longed to hear so many years—that you have forgiven me all my wrong.

“But, dear Aunt Cly, will you say it to my boy? I want to feel that, besides his father's love and care, he will have some woman to look to, some woman whose kin he is. And—life is so uncertain; we cannot tell what may come—if he should be left *alone*, will not you let him be with you—you and the boys?

“I am tired, *so* tired, but I must write this. I know what you will say. I shall watch and watch

for the answer ; and oh, I *hope* I shall be here when it comes. Tell the boys I have always loved them. Good-bye, dear Aunt Cly ! *Good-bye !*

“YOUR OWN POOR NELL.”

Tom folded the paper hastily, saying with a very suspicious faltering in his voice, “Poor child ! Of course, of course. And her husband’s dead, too, now. Then we should certainly bring the boy here. We’ll do it for her, of course, some day. There’s no special haste, I suppose.”

“What’s that you’re saying ? What is it all about ?” asked Roger, growing impatient.

“She wants us to look after her boy,” said Tom, speaking as if the note had been written that day. —“How old is he now ? She doesn’t say, I believe. We can’t refuse her, of course.”

Roger gave one quick, close look at Tom’s face, and another at his sister’s, and then made his own reply in one long-drawn sound : “Whe-ew !”

Tom turned quickly upon him, exclaiming, “What’s that ? What do you say ? You don’t mean you’d refuse a thing like that ?”

Roger took up his paper again and folded it towards the light.

“I mean to say I think there have been boys enough in this family for two or three generations back, and I don’t see the advantage of bringing any more in just now.”

"Who's talking about advantage? Here! Read this!" and Tom pushed Nelly's note towards Roger's hand.

Roger took the bit of paper, read it, passed it back to Miss Cly, and turned his paper to the light again with a look changed a trifle, but unyielding still.

"Well?" said Tom.

"Well," answered his brother, looking him quietly in the eye.

"Have you read it? What have you to say now?"

"I have nothing more to say;" and the newspaper was doubled once more for a closer view. "I am sorry"—he hesitated, and his voice softened a shade—"I am sorry the child brought so much trouble on herself. If that miserable fellow she married had died before her, it would have been better; but this boy—we have nothing to do with him—know nothing of him, in fact."

"We know *this*," and Tom made a gesture towards the note.

"She has been dead five years. It can make no difference to her."

Miss Cly uttered a half-smothered exclamation, and Roger went on.

"What difference can it make to her? Let the boy stay with his friends, whoever they are. No one knows that, I suppose, but they can probably do all that is required."

Tom looked inquiringly at Miss Cly.

"Where is the boy, to be sure? Or how old is he? Does any one know?"

Miss Cly opened the lawyer's letter, and read: "His father's friends will be more than happy to retain the boy until hearing your pleasure in the case. He has just reached fifteen years of age, and I should be glad to see my own sons promise as well."

Tom looked triumphantly across the table. "Does that answer any of your objections, Roger?" he asked.

"None in the world. I say we have had boys enough in the family, and I see no occasion for bringing in more."

"Come, come, man! Are you out of your head? We must bring him here, of course, some day. There's time enough, to be sure. A little time can make no difference after five years. When the right day comes, we'll see."

Roger settled himself to his reading with a grim smile. "You can do some of the waiting you are so fond of, before that day comes. If it waits for my consent, it will—"

"Boys," said Miss Cly quietly, though the hand that wore the Hollowbloom ring trembled a little, "the child must come here, and I wish one of you to go for him without delay. If that man were still living, I don't see how I could possibly have anything to do with the boy, even though Nell asked it; but as he's dead, the case is entirely altered."

CHAPTER IV.

THE HARP AND THE PORTFOLIO.

A WEEK before Drake's appearance at the Hollow-bloom door, the day, though breezy and comparatively fresh on the chestnut hill, had been in the city oppressive and sultry to the last degree. The streets grew more furnace-like with every hour, as pavement and wall reflected added heat. It was the last day of the summer's last month, and as if the season had not quite spent what it had to give, it seemed to fling a tenfold measure into its farewell. The gift was more than could meet a welcome; strong men grew restive and tired, weaker ones bore it as they might, and in the wretched tenement-houses children drooped and sickened by the score.

But a day can be only a day long after all; the sun and the thermometer began to go down together at last, and a stray breeze, though only coquetting at the best, brought a breath of new life now and then through the streets. But there was one poor soul at least to whom the change did not seem to bring his needed strength—a bent little man, with thin gray

hair, toiling along under the weight of a heavy harp. The harp seemed of an unusually large size, and the player, though he had managed to shoulder it and to make some headway with his burden, now gave signs of soon failing altogether under its weight. His step faltered, he hesitated, and made a motion as if to throw it from his shoulder; then drawing it to its place again, he seemed to be gathering all his strength for a new attempt.

At that moment a light step was heard approaching from behind, and another passer overtook him as he stood. The new-comer wore the dress of a gentleman, but an indefinable air and bearing would have marked him as well in the plainest garb; a tasselled Oxford cap half shaded a high-bred thoughtful face, and a pair of earnest dark eyes, that had watched the old harper's faltering, smiled, as he overtook him, with a look that carried sympathy and good cheer at once.

"The day has been hot, and the harp is heavy; is that it, *amico*?"

The harper looked up and met the eyes of his questioner with his own, from which all colour seemed to have gone out; then, as if strength had really forsaken him, he swayed to one side and nearly fell.

"Ah, signor, the day has been long. That is what I feel. Too long. It is only a long night that will give me rest."

"Oh, take heart, take heart! How far are you going just now?"

"To Little Picco Street."

"I go almost as far as that. Wait. Let me try carrying a harp;" and before the old man could remonstrate, he had slipped the instrument from the harper's shoulder and swung it skilfully upon his own. "Now rest a little. Sit on that doorstep a moment. There! Do you think you can get on now?"

The relief, the moment's rest, and the kindly words were like a cordial to the old man; he rose, and the two walked on together, past one square after another, the harper pouring out thanks and remonstrances in confused profusion of English and Italian phrase.

"Tut, tut, friend! It is nothing. We are not even meeting any one, if that makes any difference. See now; this is my door. Wait, and I will bring you a glass of water."

Leaving the harp and its master on the doorstep, he returned in a moment with the ice-cold draught.

"There! Doesn't that put new life into heart and body at once? Little Picco Street is only around the corner now. Do you think you can find your way?"

With a new outpouring of thanks, and even a glimmer of light in the faded eyes, the old man rose and shouldered his harp almost with ease.

"No thanks, comrade. Good-night to you!" and

with a gesture of farewell, he watched the old man safely out of sight. But as he turned and remounted the steps, a sudden look of pain passed sharply over his face, and he seemed almost in need of the help he had just given; but conquering himself, he opened the door and entered the room nearest at hand. Music had been heard from it a moment before, but now the player, a boy of fifteen, with a clear open face and hair crisping at his temples, stood, with a violin under his chin and a bow in his hand, much nearer the window than the music-stand where his lesson lay.

"Who is that strange old man, papa?" he asked.

"Who? A comrade in arms, I suppose, for he evidently earns his living by music, as I do mine. And one of our blessed Lord's poor ones, too, I should say, from the meek and patient look in his eyes. I gave him a cup of cold water as such, at least."

"But what could you be doing with his great old harp?"

"Oh, only what we all do for each other when we can, Guy—giving a lift. And a small one too, I'm afraid, compared with the poor old fellow's needs.

"I feel tired, I think. I don't know—this heat has been terrific. How have you stood it, Guy? You don't look as if it had touched you anywhere!" and the speaker threw himself into an easy-chair with an effort at a smile, but the sharp look of pain

crossed his face again, and mingled strangely with the attempt.

A quick flash of colour mounted to the boy's temples. "Papa!" he cried, "how far did you carry that old harp? It weighed half a ton, or less. Don't you know—" He stopped. What was he going to say?

"Nonsense, Guy. What's a thing like that to a well man? Bring me the violin; you haven't worn it out, I suppose."

He took the instrument, half raised it to his shoulder, and then let it fall again upon his knee.

"Never mind. It can wait a moment while we rest; it will be just as ready then. How very tiresome the day has been."

He closed his eyes a moment, and then opening them suddenly, said, "Guy, there are some things I have wanted to say to you. Let us talk a few minutes. Who knows whether there'll be a better time?"

He paused a moment, and then went on. "Guy, my life has not been rich, as most people would count riches, but God has put three great loves into it that have made it a kingdom for me. One of them went out of sight when he took your mother away"—he hesitated, and Guy's face flushed again, for it was only at the rarest intervals that his father spoke that name—"but that is my treasure still.

And you I have still left, and this;" and he laid a touch like a caress upon the violin.

"Guy, when I touch this it almost seems as though it had a soul. The soul of that great mystery of music dwells in it, at least—the mystery that can whisper all that otherwise lies unutterable in our own souls; but that isn't what I want to say. Did you ever think of one thing out of the hundred that make it so dear? It is always ready. I call upon it continually for something that I want, and it never says, 'Wait.' Sometimes I want bread for you and me; it is ready. Sometimes I want rest, sometimes refreshment. sometimes the past brought back to me again. Sometimes I want to pour out my own soul, sometimes to bring the soul of a great master close to mine. It is ready, always ready. No hesitation, no delay, no begrudging of the gift. Guy, I don't suppose we shall always live together—I can't tell; but whether you are with me or alone, try to remember this, and learn a lesson from the soulless thing, if such it is. Have I made you understand, Guy?"

"Yes, papa, about that; but oh—why—what do you mean by our not being together—being apart—"

"Wait, Guy. We can't tell about that; we shall stick fast as long as we live, I hope. But do you think it would be hard—hard to be always ready, and willing too?"

"Sometimes, papa."

"Yes. Sometimes, and many times, too, Guy. There never was but one Man who could do that, and *his* name was Wonderful. Think what it was to go on through that whole weary life, never weary of answering every cry that could be made. Think of him, Guy. Love him, worship him, keep close to him; for he is *so* wonderful, he will be always close to you. Do you hear, Guy?

"But that isn't all I wanted to say. There's one thing more. Remember about keeping in tune. You have a power for that, that the poor violin has not; and when you have done your best, remember there is always a Master's ear bent to listen, a Master's hand willing to help to perfect harmony. Have I made you understand?"

Guy answered with a strange feeling at his heart. Not that it was anything strange for his father to talk to him about the wonderful Master; but why did he seem so anxious to say everything just now? Was it possible that it had anything to do with those dreadful words about not being always together?

"Then, Guy, there are some things still, quite different, that I want to say."

He waited a moment, and Guy looked anxiously in his face. Was his father nerving himself for what he wished? He was so strangely pale, and his eyes looked so weary, and yet burned with such a light.

"Guy, I have never told you anything of your mother's friends. I think perhaps you had better

know—and yet there is not so much to tell. They did not wish her to be my wife; why, I do not know, except that I was poor. I believed then that I could make myself rich, for her sake; but, do you know, there are people in the world who never succeed? I am one of them, Guy. But she loved me, in spite of that. She left her friends for my sake;—perhaps it was wrong, but if so, the blame must be mine, not hers. I wrote them years afterward, and said so, because I thought it right. I asked them to blame me and forgive her, but no answer ever came.”

Guy's cheeks grew hot. “Papa, I don't believe you could do wrong. They must be dreadful people. What kind of people are they? Where do they live?”

“They live in Bolingbroke, just fifty miles from here. They are the best of people, I believe; an excellent old family, possessed of what would be wealth to us, but living simply, I suppose, as they used. As to their not answering my letter, it may never have been received—we must reckon for that possibility; but it was not strange we did not feel that we could write again. But now, Guy, that brings me to something else I wish to say—wish to say because it is right; that is all. Take this key, please; unlock my cabinet in my room, and bring me what you see lying in the first drawer at the right.”

Guy took the key and went without a word. He

unlocked the cabinet, and started as he met a delicate odour at the opening of the drawer.

"Ah, that is sandal-wood. I remember it so well. Mamma so often had it about her things. And that is her portfolio. It used to lie in the window where her ivy grew. I have not seen it for all these years. O mamma, mamma!"

He took up the portfolio as if it were almost a sacred thing, and carried it to the other room.

"Yes, that is it. I put it in that drawer the day after she died, and have never touched it, or opened it, until a week ago. I found different things there, such as you would expect; but one thing, this one thing—perhaps it ought to have been found long ago."

He raised the lid of the portfolio, and took out a tiny note, its colour changed with time.

"Do you see that crumpled corner, Guy? I must have done that when I caught the portfolio up that day. I could not bear to see it lie there, as if it were waiting for her. I have smoothed it as well as I could, and have read also what it says. What do you think, Guy? She had gathered up her courage to write once more to the old home, to try once more whether an answer would come. But before the message even set off, another one, out of the unseen home, came for her. See, the date is the very last day she was with us. It was a brave thing to write it; her love for you, Guy, gave her courage, I think,

and the drawing near eternity made earthly differences seem small. But there it has lain. Now the question is, must we not send it for her, as she would have asked us, if she had had time?"

"I should think so, of course; but I—oh, how can I tell, papa?" cried Guy, distressed with a sense that something, if not many things, must be wrong.

"We must try to decide. It was a brave thing to do, and she did it for your sake."

"For my sake?"

"Yes, Guy. It was to ask"—he hesitated, and then went on in a low, gentle tone—"it was to bespeak their love for her boy after she—"

Guy sprang to his feet with a cry, half of terror, half of wild determination. "Papa, what does it all mean? I cannot, I never, never will leave you!"

"Hush, Guy. They will never ask you; you need not fear. And while I live, my boy, your place is with me. Your mother did not mean to separate us. She only asked that if I should be taken away you might go to them. But the question for us to decide is whether the letter ought not to be sent. It does not really belong to us; it is theirs. And she wished it. Whether she would do so now, I cannot say, but she wished it then; and it was the last wish of her life, so far as we can tell."

He paused, and his head lay wearily back in the chair while he looked at Guy. Was he hoping he would say no, again? Would it be hard for him to

seem to be suing for the favour of his wife's relatives, even for his boy, and to fulfil his wife's dying wish?

But Guy did not speak. The veins in his temples were swollen and hard. He could feel them throbbing as he sat.

"Never mind then. We will put it all away for to-night, and you can take time to think what is right. Let us have a little music now, and that will rest us both."

He took up the violin and played a few strains, but the white look of pain came about his mouth again, and his hand could not carry the bow with its usual perfect touch.

"Guy," he said, "has the heat tired you very much to-day? It seems to have gone a little hard with me. I believe I shall have to say good-night. I'm like my old comrade out there; I want a night's rest;" and he smiled into Guy's still troubled face.

"Oh, and by the way, those papers on my desk. Don't let me forget; they ought to be sent off soon; to-morrow, perhaps."

CHAPTER V.

TO-MORROW.

BUT oh, to-morrow, to-morrow ! Oh, false and cruel day ! It rose fresh and clear ; the sun seemed to have spent its fierceness, and the breeze that was so fickle the night before blew steady and cool. Guy had waited for his father to come down, and had not even taken up the violin, his usual resource when the time seemed long. He was so glad it was long, for his father's sake ; he would not run any risk of disturbing him ; the rest would be so good.

But it grew so long that it began to seem very strange, and he crept softly to the door, and then stepped noiselessly inside, waited, and then stole to his father's bed. He had spoken at last, and received no answer, touched him gently, and then, with a cry of agony, had fled away for help.

Now he stood by the bedside again with the doctor, but the doctor seemed standing as idle as himself.

"Oh, why don't you *do* something ?" he cried passionately at last. "Isn't there something to be done ?" and then he grew suddenly still.

The doctor turned and looked in his white, stony face. "Has your father complained of fatigue of late? Do you remember what I told you in confidence the last time I was here?"

Did the doctor think he could forget? The words had burned in, it seemed to Guy.

"Yes, yes. You said there was some trouble with the heart; that there was some danger, but that he had better not know. I must be very careful, and must watch him; he must not lift any weight;" and the vision of the old harper rose afresh before his eyes. He remembered how he had worried about the harp the night before, but it seemed as if nothing could make his veins feel more leaden now.

"And do you think he has not done so? Did he do so yesterday, for instance, do you think?"

"Yes; there was an old man—a poor old fellow that he called comrade in arms. He helped him; he carried something.—O papa, papa, if you had only known! You loved me better than him! better than him! better than him!" and throwing himself down by the bed, he covered his father's face with his own. Then he stood up and looked steadily down at the closed eyes. "No, I am glad; I am glad he did not let him fall. He always helped every one but himself. I am glad! I am glad!"

The doctor put an arm gently round the boy, and drew him to his side. He and Guy had been friends all Guy's lifetime, and short as that life had been, he

had helped him through one terrible sorrow before.

"Come, my brave boy, come with me. It is no place for you here. I must go home now. Let me take you along."

Guy looked at him with still, wide-open eyes. It seemed to him no power could move him from the spot; but suddenly those words about being "ready and willing" seemed to echo through his heart.

"I will go, if you wish," he said slowly, "but it will not be best. It will be better to leave me here with papa."

The doctor hesitated, and took one searching look into his face. "Will you wait for me here, then, till I come back?"

Guy nodded.

"Then I will come back in an hour; it will not be much longer than that, at most;" and drawing a large easy-chair toward the bed, he placed Guy gently in it, and was gone. Guy listened to his step as he went down the stairs—one, another, and another. Now the front door opened; now it closed; now the carriage was rolling away; now it was quite out of hearing. He sprang from his seat, and the pent-up storm burst forth.

"Papa, papa, papa! Have you left me? Can you not hear me? Are you gone, quite gone? Oh, why? why? why?" and he threw himself beside the silent face again with uncontrolled outpouring of his grief.

"Oh, if I could only have told you to be careful! But you were not well before. I knew you were not well. You were tired, tired all the time. But it was right that the last act in your beautiful life should have been helping him. But still, if you could have stayed with me! with me! with me!" and the boy's well-knit frame quivered and trembled with the sobs that could not come fast enough for his grief.

But the doctor had been right in thinking it best to leave him there. For an hour he remained where he was, sometimes pouring out words to the ear that could not hear—he knew it could not, but he could not feel it yet; sometimes trembling again with the agony of the desolation when no answer came. But this was the very spending of the storm; and he rose at last, quiet, silent, and with dry eyes. There was the chair the doctor had placed for him. Yes, he would sit down. He must think. What was it he was trying to think about? Oh, he remembered now. That letter. The portfolio with the sandal-wood perfume.

"Oh yes. I thought of it last night; but I had not finished, for papa said I could have time. What did papa say? He said she might not wish the letter sent now. I have thought what he meant. He meant that I am older now. I was a child then. Now I am almost a man. I could earn my own living; I know I could; so it is not that. But perhaps she would wish it for other reasons. And papa says the

letter is theirs. They will not answer it, though. Papa thought they would not. But if they should, I can never, *never* go."

The doctor's hour was lengthening into two; a wonderful peace shone in the dead face, and the calm grew deeper in Guy's heart as he gazed upon it still. The letter was not the only thing his father was talking over the night before. He was talking about being ready and willing. And would not that bear upon the letter too?

There was a light step on the stairs; the doctor had come, and Guy started at the sound.

"I am ready," he said hastily, as the door opened. "I will go, if you are sure; but you cannot *really* want me to leave papa *alone*?"

"Did you think I meant *that*, Guy? I have brought Dan, my own man Dan. He has given your father many a drive for me, and loved him too, as many another plain man did. He will stay, and you can come again as often as you choose. But I really want you to come."

"I am ready, then," said Guy again; but the doctor looked hesitatingly about the room.

"Have you the key of your father's cabinet?" he said. "I would trust Dan with untold gold—his guard is as good as a mine, but there are formalities. Are there any papers lying about, do you know? We had better lock them up; perhaps they must be examined by some one else."

Guy started, and his white face flushed. "Examined? By some one else? But not to-day?"

"No, not until after—" The doctor stopped, but Guy looked him in the face and finished the sentence for him,—

"Until after they have buried my father?"

"Until after that. And it will only be some friend; Judge Throckmorton, perhaps. Your father loved and trusted him, you know. But they are better locked up meanwhile."

Guy went with a firm step to his father's desk. The papers he had spoken of the night before lay upon it still, and under the lid lay the portfolio; he must have felt too ill to put it further away. Guy took it up hastily, gathered other papers that lay in the desk, his father's watch and his mother's miniature. "That is all, I think," he said, in a low, controlled tone, as he came back.

"His purse?" ventured the doctor, for unpleasant things must be said.

"Never mind the purse," said Guy, with a quick gesture. "*Any* one may have it."

The doctor saw the white look coming into his face again, and said no more. Guy went to the cabinet, laid the portfolio and the papers that were to be despatched together in one drawer, placed the other articles quite on another side, and turned the key.

"Keep it," said the doctor. "Now let us go;" and in as little time as possible he got him from the room.

And when the last bitter ceremonies for the dead were over, Guy came back to the house, and opened the cabinet for Judge Throckmorton.

"*These papers,*" he said quietly, taking those that had lain on the desk, and the perfumed note, and handing them to him together—"these papers papa was speaking of the last night as something that ought to be sent away very soon."

CHAPTER VI.

THE REPLY.

ON the morning after the family discussion in the Hollowbloom dining-room, one of Nabby's most tempting breakfasts stood in perfection on the table, but Miss Cly seemed almost as abstracted as the night before.

"Boys," she said suddenly at last, "the letter I showed you last evening ought to be answered at once."

"At once?" repeated Tom; "oh, I don't know that there is any haste."

Roger peppered his omelet in silence, with a dogged look about his mouth.

"Tom," said Miss Cly with a slight flush, "you would not like it said that I made uncivil delay in answering a civil letter."

"Oh, of course, of course, if you look at it in that way. It's easily answered then; but as to going any further, there's plenty of time for that. The boy ought to come here some day, to be sure; but that can be all arranged when the right time comes. Perhaps he'd better be a little older first."

Miss Cly began to show that firm lines could come about her mouth as well as about her brother's, and her eyes grew bright.

"Boys," she said again, "I think the only thing to say is that the child shall come at once; and I should like to add that he will be welcome here. I must say, at least, that one of you will go for him without delay."

Roger laid down the bit of omelet on his fork, in spite of his usual disapproval of letting such a thing cool. "You may spare yourself the trouble of saying either of those things for me," he said. "I expressed my own views on the subject last night, and they have not changed. But I do not like to dispute with a lady on any point. You will do as you please in the house, of course, but it is not necessary to say anything for me."

"Oh, come, Rode," said Tom; "let's give the little chap a welcome, if nothing more. It's a cold world, anyhow, you know; and our Guy was—did ever fellow have a better brother than Guy?"

"Will you take the letter to the mail for me?" asked Miss Cly with a quick look.

"Of course, with pleasure; but I don't see how I can manage it to-day. I want to show Shanter's paces to a man over the Spur. To-morrow, if it would suit you as well."

Miss Cly's lips curled, as a Hollowbloom's sometimes did; not very perceptibly, but if you looked

closely enough you could see. She did not know why the fact that Tom wished to drive Shanter ten miles across the spur of the mountain "for a man" need prevent his driving a mile and a half in the other direction to the post-office for her. But she only said, "Very well," and the next morning, just as breakfast was finished, laid the letter beside his plate.

"The letter is ready, Tom," she said; "are you?"

Tom started and looked up as if a new idea were presented to his mind.

"The letter? Oh, to be sure. You asked me to get it in for the mail. I'll try; I shall be pretty busy this morning, but—;" and he slipped the letter into his pocket, and left the room.

As he did so Nabby Granger's peaked little face came in, just peeping round the door, through the crack Tom had left.

"Miss Hollowbloom!"

Miss Cly looked up and met a confidential nod from Nabby, and she had known those nods long enough to understand one perfectly when it came.

"Those there green-gages. They're just on the very melt. If they're ever to see the inside of them there fruit-jars, this is the day."

Miss Cly obeyed, and for the rest of the morning Nabby was more than supreme. She was queen of her own domain at all times, but a queen likes a visit from an empress now and then. It proved to

be rather an absent-minded empress that morning, though, Nabby thought; and more than one catastrophe seemed to her imminent as things progressed.

"Miss Cly! you're not hardening those there plums in that there alcohol before the skins are off? I never saw a Hollowbloom seem so much as if her thoughts had gone travelling, before."

Travelling they had gone—Nabby was right—with Drake's bag, first as it tramped over the road, then whirling along with the train. The letter had had one hour now; an hour and a half; two hours, at last. That was enough. It must be in the city now. It must be delivered soon. What would the boy say? Did he look like his mother? Would he be ready when Tom went for him next week? And all the time, among green-gages, mail-bags, and trains, Miss Hollowbloom's eyes saw a stray branch of fluttering trumpet-vine, and a little yellowed note that said, "Dear, dear Aunt Cly."

Suddenly she spoke: "Nabby, I shall want the south chamber put in order for use the first of next week."

Nabby started so that the heels of her felt slippers made a little clap on the floor as she came down. The south chamber! It had never been touched or entered since that morning Adam was talking about the other day, except as it was aired and dusted three or four times a-year.

"And even that there dusting and airing she has

made sure of doing herself ; but I know that the very chintzes Miss Nelly took a fancy to hang to the bed and the windows hang there still, and there's more than one trifle lying about the room just where she used it the last time. And two mistakes in the green-gages, with it all. It can't be that—. No ; there never was a Hollowbloom yet as went crooked in the brain !" But nevertheless Nabby crept softly closer to where Miss Cly stood busy with the fruit, and peered round her shoulder for a stealthy look.

But no stealthiness could escape the quickness of Miss Hollowbloom's eye.

"No, Nabby," she said quietly. "I am expecting Nelly's boy ;" and at that instant there was a flurry of wheels and hoofs, and Shanter and his master whirled into the yard again.

"It do seem as though Mr. Tom always made sure of a fresh breeze to bring in," Nabby used to say, and it seemed even fresher than usual this time. The old hall echoed with boots and fishing-rods and Troy's scampering, and calls for Adam, all at once ; and Miss Cly dropped the last green-gage in perfection into its jar, and went to the rescue.

"Ah, Cly ! And how has the morning gone with you ? Here ; just look in this basket. Did you ever see such a catch in your life ? The greatest day I ever had at the old stream—half day, rather. I hope dinner is coming on. You women who mope in the house don't know anything about being sharp-set.

Five minutes, eh?" and he started up the old stairway two steps at a bound. Suddenly he stopped on the middle stair. Let me see; there was something I wanted to say. Oh, that letter of yours, Cly! I beg twenty pardons, but I couldn't get quite round to the post-office before the mail went out. I thought I should, but I wasn't really quite ready to leave the brook. I'm sorry; but 'twill only make the difference of a day in the date. I'll put it on the chimney-piece, and it will be in plain sight for to-morrow."

Roger was just passing with his quick, steady step, and glanced up at Miss Cly with a Hollowbloom curl of his lip. Her eyes were shining, but she did not speak, even when Tom came merrily down again.

The next morning the letter looked Tom in the face from the chimney where he had placed it.

"Don't let me forget that, Cly," he said. "I want to look after Adam a little while about those changes in the stable, but I'll be back for it in time."

Miss Cly made no answer, but kept quietly in her seat till breakfast was finished and Tom's figure passed the window in search of Adam; then she went upstairs with a swift step, got a hat and a sun umbrella from the old mahogany clothes-press in her room, glided down the stairs again, seized the letter, and disappeared with it out of the side door, and over the road that Drake so faithfully travelled with his mail-bag twice a day.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FORSAKEN ROOM.

JUDGE THROCKMORTON was a young man to have a seat upon the Supreme Bench, and his peculiarly heavy and handsome hair, that for some strange reason had turned quite white, gave his face by contrast a still more youthful look, while the imperturbable silence with which he listened and looked made his few silver-toned words, when he did choose to speak, seem extraordinary for wisdom and weight.

He took the papers from Guy's hand with only a polite inclination of his head, and Guy drew a step away.

The judge stood silent a moment, and then turned with a smile under his silver mustache that gave Guy a strange quick feeling that the world was not quite so cold after all.

"I think," he said, in his low, smooth tones, "if you will wait a moment, I think it will be best for me to gather these papers up and take them to my office. Then I can look them over as I have time; and if you will step in a few moments every morning, I

can ask any questions that may be necessary. That will be better than to detain you here; and you can retain the key. Everything but the papers should be in your charge, of course."

Guy took it with a grateful feeling, and the two walked away together. Guy could not for his life tell how it was, but though the judge did not speak again till they reached the office-door, he knew he was thinking about him, and something made him feel befriended by those unknown thoughts, more than by any words that could have been said.

As they stopped at last, the judge turned and looked at him with his clear brown eye.

"I wanted you at my house," he said, "but the doctor insists that he has the first claim. Whenever he will give you up, come, unless you have other plans."

Guy answered him with a frank smile, the first that had really brightened his face,—

"You and the doctor are both so kind. Papa would be very grateful. But I do not want any one to give me shelter long. I can earn my own living, I know, and will do it too, unless"—he hesitated a moment—"unless there is something else that I ought to do."

The silver mustache curled again with a look Guy was sure he understood; but the judge only said, "We'll see what these papers say first. Come in to-morrow morning, please."

When Guy went in, there were half a dozen gentle-

men waiting to see the judge; but he sent for Guy to the inner room, and took the note for Miss Hollowbloom from a locked drawer.

"This letter is left without address, but I think it must be to one of the same family to whom I wrote for your father five years ago. Can you tell me whether it is so?"

Guy felt his face grow hot. Oh, why hadn't the judge got the note off, and out of the way, before now! He hoped it had gone long ago.

"I don't know," he said hastily; "I don't know anything about the people. I never heard of them till the other day. They were—they were mamma's friends; they live in Bolingbroke, I believe."

"Ah!" said the judge, "then I am right, and there is only one question more. The letter seems to concern yourself somewhat; I do not like to send it without asking—."

The flush grew to a great throb that made the veins in Guy's forehead like cords again, and then it went back at a strong command of his will. He had settled all that, and once for all.

"I am ready, and willing," he answered. "Is that all?"

The judge bowed again. What was he bowing to him for, only a boy fifteen years old?

"Come in again to-morrow. I will ask an immediate reply. It could be here to-morrow easily."

Guy started; to-morrow seemed so soon, and yet

it was what he had been wishing with all his heart—to get this suspense over. He could bear anything if it once came; it was the waiting for it that was so hard. And they would surely say No; they *must* say No, and that would be the end of it. But there was one thing more. “I don’t know that I ought to stay, but there is one question I would like so much to ask.”

The judge made a little gesture, and Guy went on. It seemed as if it would choke him, but it must be said.

“Papa’s things—do they belong to me? They can’t stay there very long. I don’t know where I must stay myself. Can I pack them up?”

“Certainly you can. Everything is yours; it was only best for me to look over the papers. I have hardly had leisure yet, but I hope I shall find something of value for you. As to the rest, there are no debts. I knew your father too well. I will take any risk of that myself. So make whatever arrangements you wish, only don’t stay there by yourself too much. Ask the doctor; he’ll have an eye to you.”

“Thank you; you are *very* kind;” and with a long breath of relief Guy hurried away. Now he would go back to the dear rooms once more. He couldn’t bear to look at them till he had asked that dreaded question. If they had taken the papers, what else might they not say they must take? And he must arrange things—he must do something, though he

did not know what; for as he had come downstairs with Judge Throckmorton the day before, he had heard some one speaking with the doctor in the hall. It was Mr. Leighton, he knew, the owner of the house.

"And about the rooms, doctor," he was saying in a low voice. "I feel very sorry—I should regret disturbing anything—but of course I cannot be expected to incur any loss."

"*I'll* see to that," said the doctor hastily. "Let the rooms alone;" and they passed out.

Of course he never could let the doctor be at any expense for him; and he knew his father never had a great deal of money at a time. He had not even looked into his purse yet, and he did not know where else to look; he must be careful, for what if those dreadful people should send for him, and he had not enough to go!

He put his key in the door, and stepped softly through—the very door where his father had come in with that strange look of pain on his tired face. Oh, how good it seemed to be there again! Was it only a day since he had left them and locked the door? It seemed a year—a great gulf of time at least. And here was everything—pictures, books, the favourite seats; he felt a sense of warmth stealing back over the homeless, desolate feeling that had kept such an icy weight at his heart. Oh, why had he let any one take him away?

But it was only for a moment. The warmth only

touched the very surface. The same cold hunger was lying under it still; and as his eye fell on the silent violin, a sudden chill ran over every limb.

"Papa! papa!" he cried. "They mock at me. They seemed like a part of you, but they are not, they are not. Oh, I have not complained, I have been brave to everybody, but no one will hear me now if I cry out to you. Papa! papa! I loved you so, and you have left me! Who will stay with me now? No matter who it is, I shall always be alone. Alone! alone!"

He threw himself into a chair, and covered his face; they should not mock him. He would not see anything, at least not yet.

The clock on the mantle-piece went on with its half-audible swing; that was the only sound, but an echo seemed to stir in the boy's heart: "There never was but one Man who could do that, and *his* name was Wonderful. Love him, worship him, keep close to him; for he is so wonderful, he will be always close to you."

"To *me?* close to *me?* Oh, I know he was to papa; no one could think of anything else with papa, and papa and I were together; but to *me alone?*"

The echo went on and on. It seemed to be keeping time with the swinging of the clock, over and over, and Guy felt the wild beating of his heart begin to grow strangely still. A calm was stealing in; the grief was there still, but its bitterness, its

desolateness, with that horrible cold, were they not dying out? Was not a warmth creeping in that touched the very depth of all, this time?

He sat still; he did not stir. Was it really a Presence that seemed to him drawing close, that was giving him that feeling of rest that he used to have with papa? Was it something? was it some One? If he opened his eyes, should he see the *Wonderful Man* standing there? No, he should not see; but he felt, he knew. He rose, and stretched out his arms. "Oh, if thou *wilt*! if thou *wilt*!"

He stood still a little, then moved quickly away, put the key into the cabinet, opened it, and began his work.

It was a strange old cabinet, black as jet, carved in panels, and the panels carved again with the finest work.

"Where did papa say it came from?" he thought slowly, as he touched one thing and another in an absent way. "I forget, exactly; somewhere in the depths of Germany, I believe: and some friend of papa's wanted him to have it; every one was his friend who ever knew him. Here is mamma's picture. Yes, I remember I put it here; and his watch. I don't think I will give up wearing mamma's. And all these other things; they must go carefully. I think I know where there is packing-wool, and there are boxes for some. And there—I think, just about there, is that secret drawer papa showed me one day. I have half forgotten about the spring, but I could find it, I'm sure."

He went quietly but quickly on. He always warmed up to work, whatever it was: and the things did not seem to mock at him any more; they were dear friends again, only almost sacred now; and he looked about the room for one after another, and came back to add them to the rest, until he had almost forgotten where he was.

Suddenly there was a step on the stair, another behind him, and the doctor touched him on his shoulder.

"Guy, what in the name of all that's reasonable are you doing here?"

Guy started and looked up with a smile, the first the doctor had seen on his face in all those days.

"I was putting up a few of these things. I thought I had better get them ready to move."

"You thought so! To move! And what do *you* know about that?"

Guy hesitated, but met the doctor's eye. "I heard what Mr. Leighton said to you the other day."

"You did!" exclaimed the doctor. "And don't you know—"

"Oh, please let me interrupt. You are more than kind, you have been everything to me; but I *can't* let papa's things cost any one more than I can pay. And I haven't found out yet—I don't know—"

"Humph!" said the doctor; and he took one or two turns across the room to hide a look he didn't want Guy to see.

"Grit, and high notions," he was saying to himself "Just like his father, but more of the stuff to get ahead. He'll make something worth while, that boy. But he isn't to worry himself out here alone; I'll settle that now at the outset. It isn't the thing;" and he came back to where Guy stood.

"Who gave you leave to come here?" he asked.

Guy smiled again. "Didn't you say I could come whenever I chose?"

"Yes, but not giving me the slip like this. I thought you went to Judge Throckmorton's. I don't want you here alone. It won't do."

"I have not felt that I was alone," he said in a low, quiet tone.

The doctor took a long, searching look in his face. He saw the steady light in his eye; but he saw marks of the strain that had come before.

"You're a strange boy," he said, and then put an arm gently over his shoulder as he had done the other day, but Guy could feel the firmness with it too.

"I want you to come with me now. You shall tell me what you want done, and we will see. I'll catch time for it somewhere before another day goes."

But not before another day began, it soon came to be plain. There was one extra call after another, and at last at bedtime the doctor had not come in, and Dan, who was sent for something that was wanted, said there was not much chance of it for the night; he was to put the carriage up.

"I'm sorry," thought Guy; "I should like to get something settled. If it's fighting or working, all right; but I do hate hanging by the gills! If I only had an answer to that letter it would knock off about a thousand pounds. They'll say No, I'm almost sure; there's not more than one chance in a thousand of anything else; and then I can go right to work. I can do *something* to earn my living, I know. I'll go to see the judge in the morning. If it's only fifty miles, I should think the answer might have come."

He went upstairs to his room. How he had dreaded it before, that sense of utter loneliness that had struck in upon him as he closed the door. But to-night—what made the difference to-night? There was some strange warm sense of a Friend close by, and the echo seemed to be repeating itself again: "His name is Wonderful.....He will be always close to you." Only now it did not seem to come exactly in words; it was rather in an indescribable sense of something precious being near, some One strong to lean upon, some One calling to him to trust Him. And that terrible word, *alone*! what had become of that?

"O Saviour, and Master," he whispered, with a longing to pour out his soul to this Unseen One who had surely come to him, "dost thou even draw near to *me*? Oh, come closer still! Make my heart such that thou canst stay. Draw *me* close to thee! Keep me 'ready' and 'willing' for all thy will!"

CHAPTER VIII.

READY AND WILLING.

BUT whether fifty miles or five hundred, there was no answer yet, when he went to the judge's office in the morning; and the doctor had not returned when he came back, though Dan, with his white gloves and most stately air, was just taking his place in the hall to be ready to open the door to calls at office hour. Dan wasn't in spirits, for it was hard fencing off the dozen or twenty people who were sure to come, each with a special reason why the doctor must be seen, and wanting a special explanation as to why he could not.

"And it's just five minutes wanting now, and not a ghost of a shadow of himself seen yet," he said with such a wry face that Guy could have laughed in his sleeve, when at that instant there was a sound of a light step springing to the door, and "himself" was there.

"Ah, there you are, my boy. That's right. We'll save five minutes to ourselves yet.—I'm at home, Dan.—This way, Guy;" and he threw open the office door, shutting it again as quickly, as Guy came in.

"Now, my boy, how are you? that's the first question. Well? I want you to drive me out when we get this swarm that's coming disposed of. It won't do moping here. Now as to other things; those rooms are rented by the quarter, paid in advance. There are still ten days of possession due to you. Before that time is out, you shall have all the help you need to get things put together, if you really prefer to do so; but don't go there much alone, to please me. One thing more: the law wants you to choose a guardian; talk with the judge about it. It should be done at once. Then we shall have to consult that guardian about everything we want to do; so be sure to choose one who will say Yes. There, I've opened my budget first. Now tell me, what were you planning all by yourself?"

"Oh, there goes the door-bell!" exclaimed Guy in despair.

"Never mind. You are 'the first case.' Dan understands all about that."

"I was planning there—I thought if I put all the smaller things that I valued most into the cabinet—there's no end of drawers and pigeon holes, you know—perhaps I could take them with me where I go, wherever that may be, and the violin. The rest, I suppose, would have to be put somewhere, indeed I don't know;" and a bewildered look began to come over his face.

"Wherever you go!" said the doctor, apparently not noticing the last remark—"I hope wherever you

go will not be very far, Guy ;” and the doctor spoke rapidly. “ I’ve always wished there were some little fellows of my own tumbling about the house; and you know—perhaps you don’t know—I lost the only one God ever gave me ; and a great hope died in my heart when he went. Do you think you could be happy to stay here and bring it to life again ?”

For an instant a light rushed into Guy’s face, and his eyes shone ; then it all went down again as quickly as it came.

“ Oh, don’t, don’t ! *Don’t* offer me that ! It’s too much, and it will be so hard to let it go. But I can’t ; I never could feel like a man, to take anything from you. I must work for myself, unless—unless—”

“ Unless what ? ”

Guy told him about the letter, and with an exclamation of disappointment the doctor crossed the room, and then turned quickly back.

“ Don’t you see you would give more than you could take, if you stayed ? And these people ? ”

“ They will say No. There is only one chance in a thousand of anything else,” repeated Guy confidently. “ I thought there was danger at first, but the more I think of it, the more sure I feel.”

“ H’m ! ” said the doctor slowly, in the non-committal tone doctors know how to use. “ And if that one chance comes to the top ? ”

Guy grew suddenly pale. “ I think papa—I’m afraid he would say—”

"H'm!" said the doctor again, and then turning quickly, rung the bell. It was the next patient's turn now; but the carriage would be ready at eleven. A two hours' "outing" then, and no thoughts or questions taken along.

It seemed to Guy that the next morning never would come and bring the hour when the judge would be in his office again. But the time came at last, and there was no answer from Bolingbroke yet. If they would only write one thing or another, and have it over! They couldn't have an idea how cruel it was.

Another day passed and another morning came. "No answer yet. Very strange!" said the judge.

Guy felt his heart give a spring. "They are not going to write at all. It's just as it was before, I am sure of it. I shall be free, after all."

He drove the doctor's chaise again that day with a new face, and laughed and chatted till the doctor gave him more than one searching look.

"Something has given the fellow a lift," he said to himself. "I wish I knew what it was, and I'd double the dose."

"I'll ask the judge once more this morning," Guy said, as the next day came. "After that I'll let them go. I can't worry him any more. I'm ashamed."

He stepped in lightly, it would be but a moment, and the doctor was to meet him at the rooms to see about one or two things.

The judge was engaged with some one who had come before Guy, but he stepped to his desk and handed something to the boy—a letter directed in a firm hand to Wm. Throckmorton, Esq., and postmarked Bolingbroke.

Guy felt his blood stand still, but he opened and read:—

“Your favour with enclosure was received last evening. I desire my niece’s son to come to us without delay, only regretting that her wishes in the matter could not have been earlier made known. I will send an escort for him early in the week, and it will oblige me if his preparations can be made before that time.

“Respectfully,

“CLYTEMNESTRA HOLLOWBLOOM.”

The judge left his client, and stepped over to where Guy stood. What made the boy’s face so white? Was he surprised after all? Didn’t he want to go? Not a step should he stir, if he did not.

“This proposal—is it agreeable?” he asked. “You are not bound in any way, you know.”

“I am willing,” answered Guy in a low firm tone.

The judge bowed as he had done the other day. “And you think you will be ready at the time proposed?”

“Quite ready.”

CHAPTER IX.

THE SOUTH CHAMBER.

THE village of Bolingbroke was not important enough for the railroad to swerve from an air-line for its convenience, and the air-line brought it through the valley where Miss Cly had seen the fog rising; and then close under the furthest point of the ridge of land on which the Hollowbloom mansion stood. Just where the ridge sloped away to the west, an eighth of a mile from the house, the station was built; and from that to the centre of the village measured exactly a mile and a quarter, or twenty-three minutes of Drake's long-swinging gait, as he had traversed it through cold and heat, sunshine and snow, twice a day, for the last ten years.

Drake, poor fellow, had been very near slipping out of the world with a fever when he was ten years old; and though a reprieve came, the fever left so grudgingly that it seemed to have carried his brain with it as it went; but his heart stood stancher and truer than most people's, as if to make up. He would do any one a kindness with an eagerness that took his breath,

whether he got blows or thanks in return ; and whoever wanted a faithful slave, had only to do Drake a good turn or throw him a kind word now and then.

But a stout heart, with no head to help it, has rather a left-handed fight in the world, and there seemed no very special line of work open for Drake, while there certainly was no one to work for him, his father and mother having died of the fever which he took in nursing them. Consequently he picked up an odd job here and there, slept where he could, and ate what he could get, till he was twenty or more. Clothes could not be too fantastic to suit a whim that made one of his strange vagaries, so there was no trouble on that score ; and as for pleasures, there was almost always somebody willing to be helped, and for the leisure left after all these things there was one unfailing and great delight. The new engineers, among the twenty or more that whirled through every day, used to ring the bell and whistle down brakes in terror as they came upon the strange figure standing motionless within what seemed a death-range of the track ; but it never stirred, and when they had passed, and stretched their necks out of the cab-window to see what had become of it, there it stood still, with arms swinging exultingly over its head, and a gleeful laugh that the wind sometimes brought ringing along through the roar and rattle of the train. After a while they got used to it, and would sometimes salute with a whistle, sometimes

shake a fist out of the cab-window, and shout, "Clear the track there, you. We don't want any man-catching done here."

"Why don't they clear the fellow off?" growled the driver of the "Reindeer" one day, as it stood snorting for its boiler to be filled. "He'll never know what's hurt him some day yet."

"Never you fear," answered another voice, as a shirt-sleeved arm rested on the window-sill of No. 5, and a grimy face looked out of its cab, as its train stood on a side track freighting up. You can't hurt *him*. Don't you know, if you lose your wits, you get instinct in their place? Whoever sees to us, sees to that, that's sure. There's that old fence-rail out there, that drives down here with an old picked crow that he calls a horse, and slows up forty rods off for fear one of 'em'll hear a snort—you'll run over *him* before you'll rub a hair of this fellow's head."

Sometimes a careless word seems like a prophecy, when something brings it suddenly back to mind. That very evening "the old fence-rail" as the engineer of No. 5 had called Dave Brown, the gaunt, long-limbed, cautious old mail-carrier of Bolingbroke, lingered a few moments after the lightning-express had thrown off his bag. The passenger-train was almost due, and some passenger might want to ride up with his "picked crow." "I don't like them ugly rails, and never stepped on one of 'em yet, but I wish awfully I was on t'other side long enough to

speaking to a man. There's five minutes grace yet. Folks call me skeery, but I'll risk it this time."

"This time" was the last as well as the first to poor Dave. It was a double track. He crossed the first, and walked down a rod or two on the second. That was the track of the up-trains; there was nothing due on that, but if anything came, it would come facing him, at least. At that instant a flash came round the curve just ahead.

"Coming, as I live!" said Dave, with his blood curdling, and he gave a great stride over to the other track. As he touched it there was a shriek of a whistle behind him, a trembling of the earth, and a heavy rush. Dave turned wildly one way, then the other, then, bewildered and terror-stricken, stood still, and the next moment the passenger-train thundered over the track.

When the train stopped, and frightened faces came hurrying back to Dave, they found Drake already beside him, trying to lift the limp shoulders from the ground.

"They've hurt him, I tell you, they've hurt him," said Drake pitifully, as he rested Dave's head against his knee.

The others came nearer, and looked, and put hands on Dave's chest and pulse.

"You can't help him," they said to Drake, as they drew Dave away. "You'd better leave him alone."

Drake stood up and looked at them with eager

eyes. "But I *want* to help him. They've hurt him, I say. Don't you see they've hurt him?"

"Yes, and *we* say you can't help him. He's past that," repeated the men; but Drake stood unwillingly back. Suddenly a thought struck him, and he stooped and whispered in the dead man's ear,—

"I'll carry up your mail for you, Dave; you needn't worry about that, anyhow;" and springing like a deer over the embankment down which the rush of the train had thrown the bag from Dave's hand, he seized it, and holding it high above his head, set off, with the low chant he always hummed to himself when "helping" somebody.

But who was to take it the next day, and the next year? That was the great question in the village conclave after they had given up asking, "What ever possessed Dave to venture on those ugly rails?" and Drake stood at the office window with his eager look.

"I'll help you down with it this morning," he said; "give it to me;" and after he had gone out, a general chorus set up, "Why not give it to Drake? Let *him* have it. He's faithful to death. He'd hold on if you'd tear him limb from limb;" and it was soon settled. Drake was asked if he knew Uncle Sam. Uncle Sam wanted Drake to do Dave's work for him, and would pay him well to be faithful to the mail; and from that day on Miss Hollowbloom could set her clock by the fluttering of Drake's ribbons past her window, as well as by the whistle of the train.

But in all those years neither Drake nor any other man had seen Miss Hollowbloom enter the post-office until the morning when she seized the letter Tom had left on the chimney-piece, and made her way up over the mile and a quarter with her swiftest step. Drake started at the apparition as if it had been a ghost, and followed her out of the door with a confidential gesture.

"Where are the boys, Miss Cly?" he whispered, as he beckoned her aside. "*You* can't walk. Next time, send for me. You helped *me* once, and I don't forget. *I'll* fight your battles for you. Send for *me*."

But Miss Cly had battles to fight that would have been more than a match for Drake, and they seemed only to have begun when the letter was mailed at last. It was the same old contest Miss Cly had weathered through so many times—to get Roger to say Yes, or Tom to find the convenient time.

"Boys," she said, as Nabby placed the great candlestick again after tea, "I wrote that Mr. Throckmorton that I would send for the boy early next week. Which of you'll go?"

Roger's face grew suddenly a deeper red, and his mouth settled into lines that Miss Cly knew very well.

"I hardly think you will expect me to interest myself," he said, and quietly opened his book. Miss Cly looked at him and made up her mind. When

she thought best she took her stand in the face of Roger's will; this time it was decidedly better to manage with Tom.

"Tom, can you be ready on Monday—Tuesday at the latest?" she asked.

"Monday or Tuesday! On my honour, Cly, that's bringing a man up to short time. I'll go for you with all pleasure, if you wish, but what possesses you to be in such a hurry with the thing? The boy's well enough, no doubt."

Miss Cly unravelled her ball of bright wool so quickly that it fell and rolled across the floor.

"One can hardly call the end of five years a hurry," she said.

Tom got up and brought back the ball.

"That's the very point of it all. After five years, what are a few days more or less to be considered? I don't see."

Miss Hollowbloom did not answer for a moment, then she quietly said, "I wrote that some one would go for the boy next week. I can go myself, if you prefer."

"Oh, come, Cly, don't be ridiculous. How do you think that would look? I'll go for you, of course, but we needn't settle the moment to-night, I suppose. I'll see what I can do when next week comes."

When it came, Miss Hollowbloom watched him with her bright eye, but no sign or thought of preparation for the trip appeared. Nabby was ready,

however, for her share in the work, and they went upstairs together.

"Those chintzes—are they coming down?" asked Nabby, in a tone brought lower than usual by a solemn sense of entering that room at last.

"Certainly not! Why should they?" answered Miss Cly, so hastily that Nabby stood meekly still for instructions after that; and standing still was the one thing in life that Nabby could seldom summon the grace to do.

It did not last long, however; it wasn't likely to do that where Miss Cly was; and when Nabby was dismissed at last, everything was in as good order as the day it was new—but everything stood just as before, though with a warm stream of sunshine pouring in.

There was a small round table of dark old mahogany, with its stem carved down to the branching feet, and an inlaid paper-knife lying on it, and a flagon-shaped inkstand standing by. There was a set of drawers with polished brass handles, surmounted by a set of book-shelves with closed doors; inside there were books, and in one corner a tiny workbox, with spools of thread, and a few needles rusted in their place. Over the mantle-piece hung a picture that Nabby did not venture to touch. Miss Cly dusted that herself, without a word.

"Mr. Guy, to the very life, as he was the day the Squire drove him out of the house," whispered Nabby

to herself, as she looked on; the handsome face was clear and bright still, and the eyes met Miss Cly's as if they were her own seen in a glass. There was no need for any one to ask if it was a Hollowbloom.

"And Miss Nelly always did like it so hanging there. I wonder if the one that's coming will feel the same. And there's her little watch-case, with its velvet back, and its front all worked in a forget-me-not, with beads; just where she left it, tied with its ribbon to the head of the bed. I wonder who may be wearing the watch itself. There, that there's the last touch to the room, so far as I can see; and time enough too, for Miss Cly's looking white 'as a ghost."

"Nabby," said Miss Cly suddenly, "that's all I shall need from you. Go down now, and send Adam up."

Poor Nabby! She was very much in the way of expressing her opinion upon matters as she went along, but this time she stood dumb; then catching up her broom and cloth, she fled away as if she really thought a Hollowbloom had gone beside herself at last; and Adam came slowly up, with a dazed, half-frightened look in his face.

"Come in," said Miss Cly, as Adam hung on the door-sill, looking deprecatingly at his shoes and himself in general, and then up at Miss Cly. Nabby had made his hair stand up with the news the night before, but he never dreamed that *he* was to get

mixed up in the fray. He had never been in that room in his life, and it had been a haunted chamber to him now for over fifteen years.

But there was no mistaking the tone of Miss Cly's "Come in," and Adam stumbled over the door-sill and stood just one inch inside. "Try the wall there," she said, pointing to a vacant space, "and see if you strike anything strong enough to hold those antlers that hang in the hall. The boy may like to think that his—" She stopped. That his grandfather shot the stag that wore them; was *that* what she was going to say? She glanced up at the picture over the chimney. Yes, her handsome, gay, favourite brother Guy, who had never seemed a day older to her than when he went away, *he* was the grandfather of this boy! Well, he would have been comparatively a young man still. Never mind.

The antlers were hung, and a silver-mounted fishing-rod, that had stood in sections in Miss Cly's mahogany wardrobe all these years, and a cane with a fox's head carved at the top, were fastened over them.

"I hope the boy will like them," Miss Hollowbloom said quietly to herself, and then ran downstairs with her swift step.

The next morning, Tom came down in extraordinary spirits. "There's a meeting of stockholders at Gray to-day, Cly," he said. "I hear the mill has been doing a heavy business the last six months. I must go over and see what the dividends are."

Miss Hollowbloom looked at him a moment, and then poured his coffee without a word.

"To-morrow, then, you will be at leisure, I suppose?" she asked, as breakfast progressed.

"To-morrow? I suppose so. Oh, that trip to the city. I told you, Cly, we'd see about that some time this week. I'll get off if I can."

Miss Hollowbloom closed her lips tightly and waited for the week to pass, but every day seemed to bring some important business to Tom; and when Sunday came, Nabby condescended to give Adam a confidential piece of her mind, interspersed with significant nods.

"Do you see the shining she has been going about with in those eyes of hers all day? Somebody'll hear what that means when to-morrow morning comes!" and once more Adam's hair stood up with amusement when it came. He was to drive Miss Cly to the station for the nine o'clock train, and Miss Cly had not been in a train, to his certain knowledge, these five years past.

As Nabby gave the order from the kitchen door, Roger happened to pass by, and he turned and went quickly back to the house.

"Cly, what does this mean? Why don't you let Tom take his time about that boy?"

Miss Hollowbloom met his eyes with a light in hers that would have made Adam ready to melt into the earth.

"For reasons that I think you understand," she said quietly.

"But it's too ridiculous. Tom himself has sense enough to see that. You don't want to publish just how things stand in the family; and that's what it will do, especially as I'm going to the city on business myself to-day."

"You are! Then, Roger, it *would* be ridiculous."

He made no reply, and Miss Cly quietly untied her hat.

"Roger, since you are going to the city, I wish you to bring home the boy," she said.

CHAPTER X.

WAITING AND OFF.

THE week had seen several things accomplished for Guy, though it had not summoned him to Bolingbroke. The cabinet was packed and ready to remove, and the rest of the furniture was stored for the time. He had chosen the doctor for his guardian, and the surrogate had allowed his choice, the doctor being the only one to hesitate.

"I don't know about this thing, judge," he said, as he met Judge Throckmorton on the street. "If there are any business matters, I'd rather see them in your hands."

The judge shook his head. "There is nothing of importance in the papers. In fact, there seems to be no property at all. Strange, that a noble fellow like our friend never could get any hold of the world."

"That's true; he was a friend to every one but himself, somehow or other, poor fellow. But, judge, if there is no property, *I'm* all right. I can look after the rest. And I'll tell you another thing—I want the boy, and I'm determined to have him, unless

there's a mighty strong claim put in by some one else. This letter business—you understand it, I suppose?"

"I was obliged to read it."

"And what do you think?"

"I'm afraid you'd hardly have the heart to come in there, unless the boy should object himself."

"And do you know what the people are?"

"Highly respectable, I believe."

The doctor made an impatient gesture. "He'll have to go, then, for a while, I suppose. But if they don't make him like it, he shan't stay; that's all that's to be said. And he'll be ready for college in two years. I'll enter him here in the city, and that'll give him to me nine months of the year, and they may have him during vacations, if they'll treat him well enough to keep their claim."

Guy thought the week never would be done. The second suspense was worse than the first, if possible. Now that his going was decided, he wanted it to come. He wanted the parting wrench over; and he wanted to see the new people, and the place that was to be home to him now—now, and for the rest of his life, he supposed. What kind of home would it be? The very rooms at the doctor's grew dearer as he thought each day would be the last; and each ring at the bell gave him a start. But still no summons came.

"Well," he said to himself, half laughing, half in despair, "I don't see but I've got to learn waiting and being ready at the same time. It's pretty rough

on a fellow, I think ;” and he glanced at his packed trunk and portmanteau in which he had been trying to live for days. “Never mind ; I suppose both are good. I’ll try it, anyhow.”

“See here,” said the doctor the next time he came in ; “if those people don’t want you enough to send for you, we’ll tell them we’re very glad of it, before long. Eh, Guy ?”

Guy laughed again, but with the same leaden feeling under the laugh.

“Oh, I guess they want me. I’m afraid there’s no trouble about that.”

“Afraid, eh ?” asked the doctor quickly. “Does that mean you hope they won’t ?”

“Oh, no. I must go. That’s settled, you know.”

“Well, I must see who comes. I may not like his looks well enough to let you go. And I must see you off, if there are forty patients waiting.”

Guy went up to his room again. It had never seemed really lonely since that night when comfort first stole in. After all, what great difference did it make whether he was waiting or pushing through ? He was ready at any rate ; and that one terrible, desolate agony of feeling that he was alone would never come again, wherever he was.

But the grief was there still, and more than once the unutterable longing took such hold that a strange trembling seized him, and he looked with a dull curiousness at his hands that would not keep still.

"Papa, papa," he broke out, "I miss you so. I long for you, I love you more than I ever did before. But I am ready, I am willing to have it so, since it is God's will. But, O papa, the Wonderful One—he is close to me. I rest on him; he comforts me, as you used to do. And oh, you would be glad if you could know. You would be glad."

But it was only now and then, and more and more seldom, that the paroxysms came, and the peace and the calm grew steadier and more deep. The tie to the doctor, too, was growing closer every day.

"Oh, if it had only been with *him* that they wanted me to stay. I mean, if I'd had any claim on him. But never mind; I won't think of that. If mamma loved these other people, I'll try to do the same, for her sake; only I must get somewhere where I can go to work pretty soon. I can't stand this loafing much longer."

When office hour was over on Monday morning, Guy had a strange feeling that he could not bear to have the doctor go out.

"Why, what's the matter with me?" he said, giving himself a shake. "I'm not going to turn spoony, I hope." But nevertheless he managed to get in the way for a good-bye.

"Is it all day off?" he asked.

"Pretty much, I'm afraid. I'm off for the other end of the city now, with a long list besides, and a hospital lecture on the top of the rest. But keep a

look-out for me. I'll be back. You must have something to do yourself, though, in the meantime. What have you got?"

"I'm going to try"—he hesitated—"I'm going to have a little practice on my—on papa's violin."

The doctor looked doubtfully at him. "Better go over to the island with that errand I gave you. Sunshine and open air, you know. But do as you please."

Guy went upstairs and took out the violin. It was the first time since that night, that sorrowful night. The first sound as he drew the bow across it made him start; then it seemed pleasant; he would go on a little while at least; and at last he had forgotten everything, and was fighting a hard place in his notes, when there was a knock at the door, and Dan looked in.

"Gentleman in the drawing-room to see you, sir;" and he handed Guy a card.

Guy started and stood still. Then he stretched out his hand and took it with a strange, leaden feeling in his fingers. At last!

"I'll be down, Dan;" and Dan disappeared. But when he was gone, Guy only stood looking at the bit of pasteboard as if his eyes would go through.

"Roger Hollowbloom." Who was that? That must be an uncle of his. Had he come for him? Of course he had; and he still stood, as if he and the card had turned to stone.

Suddenly he roused himself. "Now, see here. What kind of pluck is this for a fellow as old as you? You sent for him; you've been wishing he'd come, and he's taken the trouble to do so. Now go and say you're much obliged, as civilly as you know how. As for going with him, that's settled long ago."

Mr. Roger Hollowbloom meanwhile was walking the drawing-room, as if to pace off some of the various surprises the day had been piling up. To find he had himself come for the boy was enough; but this "William Throckmorton" whom Cly had sent him to, why didn't somebody find out he was the Judge Throckmorton that all the State was proud of? And as for this doctor—this guardian of the boy's that the judge had referred him to—even out in Bolingbroke they knew that Dr. Holt was the first counsel in the city, in his specialty, if not outside of it, and had his brown stone front besieged by liveried carriages every day. And both these men were friends of that miserable fellow whose boy Cly was determined on taking to the house.

But he had not long for his reflections, for in the midst of a quick turn a step approached, and a figure stood in the door—a tall, finely-formed boy, with hair like Tom's, eyes that no Hollowbloom could disclaim, and a manly, handsome face altogether; that must be confessed.

"I am Guy Powers; are you my Uncle Roger?" he said.

Roger stopped with a start of new surprise. The boy looked altogether better than he expected, and—his uncle? Yes, he supposed he was; he couldn't say No, at least, and he mumbled some acceptance, he hardly knew what. Guy stepped forward and held out his hand with a frank, cordial smile.

"Then I have been expecting you; you are very kind. You have come for me, I suppose?"

The colour came up in Roger's face. The boy had the best of it, certainly, and he felt himself melting down a little, for shame, if nothing else.

"Yes, I have come for you; at least, my sister wished it. She is expecting you. You are ready, I suppose?"

"I am ready," said Guy with another smile; but Roger's quick eye saw something behind the smile.

"What makes the boy so white? He didn't look like that when he came in," he mentally commented; but he only added aloud, "That's well, for we haven't much time to waste. The train leaves in about an hour."

An hour! Guy felt his blood stop, and then bound up again with a sudden leap.

"But the doctor!" he exclaimed,—“he will not expect me to leave without seeing him. He will expect to see you.”

"I should be very happy to see the doctor," answered Roger, with a bow that Guy did not understand; "when will he be in?"

"Oh, it may be hours; we never can tell."

"Then I shall have to forego the pleasure. It is quite understood with him that you go, I suppose?"

"Yes, it is understood, of course."

"Then we had better lose no time. Anything he may wish said can be as well done by letter. Is your luggage here?"

"My trunks are here; but there is"—he hesitated—"there is a piece of furniture—"

"Oh, don't bring any furniture," interrupted Roger. "The house has all it can hold already. I have a carriage here, and we must not miss the train."

Guy stood bewildered. To go this moment! Not to see the doctor! And to leave his precious cabinet behind! But what right had he to resist? If his mother's friends were willing to take him, and not willing to have "furniture" brought, what had he to say?

"But—but I must see Mrs. Holt, at least," he stammered. "I could not leave without her consent."

Roger looked annoyed. "Did you not say it was understood? And I certainly cannot come again."

"Yes, certainly. But the doctor meant to see me—to see you; indeed, I *must* see Mrs. Holt. They have both been so very kind."

Roger bowed again, and Guy hurried upstairs with a decidedly sinking feeling in the courage he had summoned so bravely just before. This man, with his smooth, florid face, his cold reserve, his distant,

polite bows, and no welcome—was this the man from whom he was to accept all that meant home?

“He has never said he wants me. He has never said he was glad. He said his sister sent him. And my cabinet!—there is no room in the house for that. Oh, I *meant* to like him!” and with a quick revulsion of feeling that tingled to his finger-tips, he knocked at the door of the sunshiny room where Mrs. Holt had helped him through so many hours that would otherwise have dragged miserably.

“What! at this moment? They have really come? At last? And not wait till the doctor comes in? Oh, my dear Guy, how will that ever do?”

Guy summoned up everything that ought to come uppermost, and smiled so bravely that she was half deceived. “Why, Guy, I really believe you want to leave us. But the doctor—he will be very angry.”

“Do you think so? Wild horses couldn’t take me if I thought that. But he has come all this way, and he can’t wait, and he can’t come again. What *shall* I do?”

Mrs. Holt hesitated. Guy thought her the most beautiful of women, but she had never looked half so beautiful to him before; there was a look in her eyes that seemed trying to cover him and keep him at once.

“Guy dear,” she said gently, “we want you so very much ourselves.”

“Oh, don’t, don’t!” answered Guy with a gesture

and a sudden cry; and then instantly mastering himself, he smiled again. "You are so kind. But it is right to go, and perhaps it is better over with. It is only fifty miles, you know, and the doctor can send a force after me if he likes;" and he looked at her with a light laugh.

She had recovered herself too. Yes, the boy was right; he must go, and it should be made easy for him as far as she could help.

"Come and introduce me then, Guy, and I'll see if he is fit to trust you with, while Dan does anything you wish. I'll explain everything to the doctor when he comes." And Guy ran downstairs again with half the burden gone.

A graceful woman can do strange things sometimes, while a man does not even know that they are done. By the time the trunks were down and good-bye was said to Dan, and Guy looked in at the door again, Roger found himself soothed and smoothed into complacency toward *almost* all the world. That fellow that Nelly had married, to be sure, didn't quite come in, but perhaps he wasn't quite as bad as he had thought; and these friends of his seemed very fine people certainly, and were very polite. They seemed very ready to trust the boy with the Hollowblooms, too. They had heard of them; that was not strange, but it was pleasant, of course. And the boy—they appeared to think very much of him. He certainly had the gentleman about him, after all, and

"if Cly chose to bother herself," why, he was willing. So Roger said good afternoon with a grace that made Guy feel as if an iceberg were melting down.

"If she could only go along and keep up the thaw," he said, with a half-laugh to himself; and then, as Roger was directing the coachman, he ran back for an instant inside the door.

"There's one thing," he said hurriedly,—*"my cabinet. It can't go. Ask the doctor to keep it for me. And oh, tell the doctor he is next—indeed he is next to papa. You can never know what you have both been to me."*

Mrs. Holt stooped, and Guy felt a kiss touch his forehead; it ran through every vein and fibre with a sudden thrill. *"Mamma used to do that. No one ever did that since mamma."*

There was an impatient rattle at the coach-door; Guy turned and was gone.

CHAPTER XI.

UNCLE ROGER.

ROGER HOLLOWBLOOM had far too much self-respect to be guilty of any conduct that could be called rude; and as for positive unkindness, that, to do him justice, his nature would not allow. But it was still more impossible for him to play the hypocrite; that he *could* not do, and consequently, if people would be for ever proposing one thing after another that he did not like, how could he accede or acquiesce, or pretend that he did so when he didn't? Of course he couldn't, and that was what made the perpetual difficulty of life, and the special difficulty of this railroad trip by the side of his new nephew, if so he was to be called. Since the boy was to go to his house, since he had asked him himself, he couldn't tell him that he didn't want him at the same time; and yet he certainly wasn't going to pretend that his coming was the most acceptable thing in the world. He made quite a bustle of arranging shawl-straps and packages, gave one very close look askance at Guy's violin-case, though he made no inquiry as to what it contained,

remarked upon the weather once or twice, offered Guy a newspaper, and finally settled himself to reading his own with a look of decided relief.

Guy took the paper that was offered, and opened it before his eyes; he was no hypocrite either, but his quick perceptions had read through everything else.

"As long as I hold this thing up here, he won't feel obliged to talk against his will," Guy said to himself indignantly; and he settled it before him with a *crinkle* that promised steady work. "Now there's one thing positive. If the rest of them out there don't want me more than he does—"

He did not finish the sentence; there was a reaction coming on, after the effort he had been keeping up for the last hour—a dreary, leaden feeling, that dragged more and more heavily the longer he sat beside "this man," while a half-resentful feeling rose beneath it, and tingled through with a stir that made a most uncomfortable mixture, to say the least.

Why hadn't he told him out and out, in the first place, that he didn't want him? It would have been a very simple matter to settle then.

The train rattled on, and Guy's eyes were still fixed on the central column of his paper, of which he hadn't read a word. How rough the road was! And what a stupid engineer, slowing up at every three-mile station with a jerk that might dislocate a neck. He never had been out of the city on this road before.

What dull, flat plains, and insignificant little towns! Was Bolingbroke going to look like the worst of them? Were the rest of the Bolingbrokers like this new-found uncle of his?

Half an hour passed. Roger offered to exchange papers, and Guy took the new one and fixed his eyes on the middle column as he had done before. But they wandered off at last, they were tired of it, and they fell upon the violin. Suddenly train, trouble, uncle, and all had vanished out of sight, and his heart flew back to that dear room, that dear last night, and the echo came in again.

"The soul cannot speak from the strings unless it be in tune. Remember that, and that you've a power for it that the poor violin has not. And remember there's a Master's ear always bent to listen, a Master's hand always ready to help."

"O papa, papa, I thought I was trying to please you; but I was not, I was not.—Oh, wonderful Master, how can I expect you to stay with me if I am wrangling and jangling out of tune like this? Oh, do not leave me. I could not bear that. Forgive me; help me. Indeed I will try to get right."

The struggle was not a long one. The Master touches and strengthens the hand that is outstretched to him; and we can do a great deal with ourselves when we really try, with his help.

"I hope my new uncle isn't as keen-eyed as I am," Guy was saying to himself before long. "He may

have been thinking what an ill-tempered nephew he had. What fault is it of his if he don't care about taking me home? I'm sure I might have thought it a horrid plague to have a new-comer pushing in with papa and me; and if it's that to him, I think he's behaving as civilly as he can; if he weren't, 'twould leave double duty for me, that's all. And I am not going to Bolingbroke to please either him or myself; there are quite different reasons; so why should I fret if I find neither is done? If I can only keep the *one Friend* close, that's all I'll really need."

He glanced toward the other newspaper. It was dropped, and Roger was looking out of the window. Guy folded his own, and turned with the same frank smile that had come so near conquering before.

"It's a pretty country here, Uncle Roger. Is it like this at Bolingbroke?" for blue hills were beginning to rise on either hand; knolls, groves, and rivulets flitted by, and a picturesque little chalet of a station was just coming in sight.

"Yes, much the same. A little more highland as we come near."

"And these rocks—these odd gray rocks with the white stripes?"

"Trap rock, with limestone veins," said Roger; and as the friendly tones couldn't help renewing Mrs. Holt's "thaw," he went on pointing out one object of interest after another, and taking Guy's interspersed chat kindly enough, until suddenly the

whistle sounded down brakes again, and he began to gather up their bits of property.

"Here we are, I believe," he said; and Guy felt a great thump at his heart. It is one thing to take a leap into an unknown sea, and another to feel the waters really close over your head. The engineer bumped the long train together again, a brakeman with a little head and piping voice called out, "*Bollingbrook*;" and they were hustled out—a tall, stoop-shouldered man watching for them as they came.

"Yes, sir; waggon's here, sir," said Adam's voice. "Holly, not Shanter, sir; Mr. Tom has Shanter over the spur." And Adam took the luggage from their hands, stowed it in the waggon, and standing respectfully aside, handed Roger the reins.

Holly took the road, and swung up the hill with a steady pull that soon brought the waggon to the top; and the grove of chestnuts, with one red Hollow-bloom chimney peering through, came in sight. In another moment the house itself was in view; then they rolled into the yard and up to the west side-door.

The door opened, and Miss Cly's tall figure, with the certain air of elegance it always had, stood just inside. Roger jumped out, and Guy sprang after. Roger threw the reins over Holly's back, then turned, hesitated an instant, and half stumbling over the new name, said, "This is your Aunt Cly." Then he hurriedly began pulling out the parcels Adam had

stowed in the waggon. Guy stepped across the flagstone, up to the threshold, then inside the door, and Roger sprang into the waggon again and whirled Holly off to the stable at a rattling pace; it seemed to make no difference where Adam was this time.

For an instant Miss Cly stepped back, and looked into Guy's face with an intense, searching gaze. Tom's hair—that was his father's too. Guy's eyes—yes, her brother Guy's beautiful eyes; and the same winning, friendly shining in them that she had trusted and rejoiced in from the time she used to follow him over the farm, holding his hand, to the day he went away, anger burning in his heart and leaving fire to smoulder behind him in the old squire's for many a year. And Nelly—yes, there was the same mouth and smile that waited for a welcome when Adam lifted Nelly in at that very door. She made a sudden movement as if she would have thrown her arms round the boy and held him tight. Then, as suddenly stepping back, she held out her hand, and said quietly, "Come in, Guy; you are very welcome here."

That one instant was enough for Guy. He stepped in, knowing that to one person at least he had a right and a share in the old home.

They went into the dining-room. Nabby had a fire on the polished brass andirons, and one silver cover already on the table. How strange it all looked—the carved wainscottings, the high walls with

the cream-coloured paint, and the high-backed chairs with the brass nails round the seats.

Troy started up from the rug with a quick short bark, and came toward the new-comer with an investigating sniff. Guy held out his hand; Troy smelled it, passed round him, glanced first in his face and then into Miss Cly's with a startled look, then licked the extended hand with a low whine.

"This is a new master, Troy," Miss Cly said. Troy gave a contemptuous snort, as if he didn't want to be told what he knew, and settled himself at Guy's feet. Guy had two friends in the house.

"That dog found him out for a Hollowbloom, first off," whispered Nabby in great excitement, as she went back to the kitchen from the peep she had been taking through the crack of the door; "and if he says so, the rest of us may as well."

But Adam only gave a low half-growl in reply. "Another boy!" If it had been a girl, now. If he could have brought another little Miss Nelly to the door. But another boy! Adam would wait and see.

Roger came in and saw with one quick glance of his eye how it was with the dog. "Humph," he said under his breath, and then asked if supper was ready.

"Yes, but it is waiting for you and Guy;" and Miss Cly led the way from the room to show Guy to his.

The evening was short in reality, but long from a

feeling of constraint. Everything was strange; and though Roger busied himself in a book, and did not speak, Guy knew he heard every word, and Miss Cly knew it too. Guy chatted on as well as he could, but it all seemed to be avoiding things that he had better not say; and Miss Cly said still less. Tom had not come home, though Miss Cly was listening for the wheels every moment. Then Guy got a book, and at last was glad when it would do to say he was tired and would go upstairs.

The day had been long and trying, that was true; it seemed a week since Guy saw the doctor go out of the door. But tired as he was, and hard though the day had been, there was peace in the boy's heart. He had chosen to have it all come, and ready and willing he was still. And the Unseen Hand!—he felt it holding him close. The Wonderful One was with him. He had felt sure of that all day. Oh, how wonderful it was, and what rest and strength and comfort His presence brought. He had never felt anything like it, except with papa; that was like it, but it was different too. He stood still, and looked round the room with a strange sensation of delight.

"This was your mother's room, Guy. You will find things in it that were hers," was all Miss Cly had said as she showed him in, but that was enough. Supper was ready then, but now he went from one thing to another, examining each, sometimes feeling that they were too sacred to touch, sometimes catch-

ing one in his hand and pressing it with a passionate touch.

“O mamma! *you* were here, and not so many years ago. And it is so kind of Aunt Cly. I wonder if she talks more when Uncle Roger is away. I don't believe she does. I don't believe she ever tells. But I think she has missed you fearfully all this time. I think that is why she wants me. And I am so glad of the horses and the dog. And I wonder what Uncle Tom will be like.”

CHAPTER XII.

BOLINGBROKE.

THE next morning dawned bright, and the one east window in Guy's room let in a flood of crimson light as the sun thrust itself through the one long misty bar that lay sleepily on the horizon. Guy started up. Where was he? Oh, he knew. He felt for his watch where he had hung it the night before, in the faded velvet forget-me-not at the head of the bed. Half-past five. How superb everything was outside! There was the camel-humped hill that looked so blue in the south-east yesterday; it was blazing like a mirror now, with dew and red light. How far off was that? Ten miles perhaps. He'd walk it some day before long and find out. He'd walk *somewhere*, too, before he had his breakfast this very morning. He couldn't lie in bed and look at this. He would see what Bolingbroke was made of.

He sprang up and got ready as fast as trunk straps and the first morning's confusion would allow. Everything he wanted seemed to be locked up, or in a new place that he couldn't remember yet; but they

all turned up in one way or another, and just as the old moon-faced clock struck six, his hand was on the latch of the door.

Oh, if his father could only go too! It would be the first morning walk he had ever taken without him. Should he ever get over missing him so? He hoped not. He would rather bear that than forget. But it was hard to bear.

He ran down the stairs. The hall, at least, did not seem overcrowded with "furniture;" and there was a vacant space in his room, just under the antlers, where his cabinet would exactly fit.

He turned to the great front-door, as a matter of course; but something in the solemnity of the heavy old lock with its monstrous key made him hesitate, and he remembered where he had come in the previous night. He found his way quickly; and as he stepped out on to the flagstones, a short, quick bark of recognition made him start.

"Oh, you there, Troy? Then we'll be off together. That's jolly!" And he ran lightly down the yard, Troy bounding round him in a medley of circles, patronizing yelps, and salutes upon the hand.

Bolingbroke village did not seem to be very much of a place after all, at least so much of it as he could find, and even in the fresh morning light did not do a great deal to keep Guy's spirits up. There were the post-office and a blacksmith's shop, and two or three stores. Then a few small, unattractive dwelling-

houses, altogether too close upon the street, and one of them adorned with a clump of red dahlias that straggled over the fence. Then there was a church with green blinds and a square tower, fenced into a corner lot that looked to Guy very much like a small grass-field. Further on there were one or two cottages of a little more tasteful outline, but very queer paint, and then came a long stretch of locust-grove; then a small stream that widened on each side of the bridge. There was some little attempt at architecture about the bridge, which was rather picturesque on the whole, and the pond had willows sweeping its sides; but after that came more unattractive houses, then just the outline of a roof and chimneys like the Hollowbloom house, the rest being hidden behind great elms, with evergreens in front.

"Troy, if there are any people in these houses that I shall ever like, they're like pearls in clam-shells," said Guy, with a half-laugh and a half-sinking at his heart. "Never mind, we'll have a run, all the same. Here's a square turn that must bring us home all right, I think;" and they set off.

When Guy entered the yard, smoke was curling from the chimney beyond the stoop, and there were very suggestive sounds in Nabby's domain. He had never thought to ask about the breakfast-hour. What a pity it would be if he were late!

He stepped quickly into the breakfast-room, his hair tossed, and his face glowing with his run; but

there was no one there. Yes, there was a tall, manly figure on the rug, the face hidden behind that stupid paper Guy had tried to pore over yesterday.

The paper was lowered at the sound of his step, and a pleasant pair of eyes took one quick, but thorough look at Guy; then the paper was tossed away and a hand held out.

"So, so, youngster! They gave your Uncle Tom the slip yesterday. I was going to bring you down myself; had been trying to get off for a week. How are you, then? Come and shake hands."

Guy stepped up with a feeling of thankfulness. Uncle Tom didn't match Uncle Roger, at least. Then Miss Cly came in, and Roger, Nabby, and breakfast followed in short order. Guy found his tramp had given him the first good relish he had had for a fortnight, and Tom rattled on an accompaniment to the meal.

"A stupid country, half of it, between the city and us. So you have been out to see Bolingbroke already. How does it look?"

"Really, Uncle Tom, I haven't seen much of it yet."

"Humph! That means the truth isn't best spoken at all times. Out with it, now, in plain English. It's a poky place, eh?"

Guy laughed. "Well, if you will have it, I think the country is fine, but I'm afraid the Hollowbloom place spoiled me for the rest of it, a little."

"Good!" said Tom, bringing his hand down on the table; "but the best of what there is lies scattered and out of sight. I can show you houses as good as this, though I won't say how it is with the people inside. Suppose we have Shanter up after breakfast and scour off for a look over the hills? Adam wants some grape-posts, I believe. We can see a man about them on our way."

Guy's eyes sparkled, and breakfast went on. Roger left the table when he had finished his, and Tom asked Guy, when Miss Cly rose, to "hold on" half an hour or so for him, and he would be at the door. Guy thought he saw signs of a conclave between Miss Cly and Nabby, and finding his last night's book, he established himself on one of the little shelf-like seats that were fixed in the portico under the trumpet-vine. The book did not interest him much; it was rather a heavy old thing in fact, and he was listening for Shanter's hoofs, if the truth were told. But presently Nabby's voice, coming nearer as she stopped in the hall for a last suggestion, came in between the divided efforts of his mind.

"Just see those grapes on the home-vine, Miss Cly. Adam's knee is that bad he could as well go on his head as climb a ladder. They're more than superb, and it's cruel to see 'em waste, and I'm ready for the spicing and pickling, to say nothing of the hand-press being just come home."

Miss Cly looked worried. The grapes on the

arbour-vine were specially dedicated to home use, and Nabby went through an annual set of mysteries with them, the results of which Tom and Roger were both quite ready to appreciate as winter dinners came along; while as to the "hand-press," many a half-nourished Bolingbroke invalid, struggling to get well on low diet poorly cooked, got his or her first real start in convalescence through a little of "Miss Hollowbloom's" light wine.

"I should be very glad to get them down, Nabby," she said, "but—"

She didn't finish the sentence, but Nabby knew what the rest of it was just as well: Roger wouldn't think it the thing for him to do, and Tom would never get ready; while as for "picking up a hand" for "an odd job" in Bolingbroke, that was never easy to be done.

Guy's book was laid down, and his face looked in at the door. "What is that about grapes, Aunt Cly? Couldn't you trust me? I'm not very experienced, but I do know a bunch when I see it."

Miss Cly gave him a quick, pleased look. "Thank you," she said; "but when could you be ready?"

"Ready this moment, of course."

"But Tom is coming soon; you are going off with him."

"Oh, he said in half an hour or so. Half an hour will do piles of work. Isn't there a ladder somewhere lying about?"

The ladder was close at hand, Guy sprang up the rounds, and a rustling began in the old arbour that promised a speedy lightening of its bars.

Nabby went about the kitchen in an excitement that pattered the felt slipper-heels back and forth with quick little taps.

"It's a new day to the Hollowbloom house, a new day to the Hollowbloom house, I say, if there's a man coming into it that'll ever do a thing when he's wanted," she said to the preserving-kettle as she dusted it out. "If that boy didn't give Miss Cly the winningest look out of those eyes he's got!"

The half-hour passed, and another hour followed on its heels; one basket after another had come laden into Nabby's domains, until even she had begun to cry for mercy, and yet neither Tom nor Shanter had come in sight. Guy could hear Shanter's hoof scraping and pawing at the stable-floor with impatient blows, but Adam was still moving stiffly and solemnly among the rows of Antwerps he was tying up; there was no sign of getting the harness out.

Guy sat down with his book again, but he didn't find out much more of what was in it than he had gathered of the newspapers' contents the day before, and he got up at last and went upstairs. He would open his trunks and try to get his things a little settled. But getting settled proved to be rather heavy work. A dull, miserable feeling of homesickness was fighting hard to get the better of him.

"Oh, how am I ever to stay in this great, lonely house? What am I ever going to do here? Every one else is busy, but nothing is any affair of mine. If Aunt Cly would ever tell me what she is thinking about, and if Uncle Tom weren't away all the time! If I could only see the doctor one half-hour!" He leaned on the window-sill and looked out. If he could just have rattled off on that drive! Though what would be the use, with only ugly little houses and blacksmiths' shops to see?

But suddenly, with a thought of the Master watching him, and a cry to him for help, he caught up a handful of things and pulled open one of the old brass-handled drawers.

"Now, if I've got any sort of stuff in me," he said resolutely, "this is the time to show it. I didn't come here to amuse myself; I came because I thought it was right, and that's enough. And if I want anything to do, I hope I'm not such a blockhead that I can't find something or make something. And I've got one Friend, at least, who understands. It can't be really desolate again if it were Kamtchatka instead of Bolingbroke."

He worked away busily. What had he been thinking of, to bring away such a waggon-load of things! How was he ever to get them straightened out? But they began to fall into shape at last.

"That closet's large enough to live in," he thought; "and as to the other places, they're convenient as can

be, and I shall get used to them, of course. What's that? The dinner-bell. I can't go till I've had a splash."

Tom was already in the dining-room when Guy went in. "Oh, here you are, young man. I hope you're of a forgiving turn of mind. I wasn't quite ready when that half-hour was up, and then a fellow came along and reminded me of an engagement I had made with him for yesterday, and had missed, getting home so late last night. He dragged me away, whether I would or wouldn't. But never mind; we'll get off this afternoon all the same."

Roger looked up at Guy with a sarcastic curl of the lip. "Have you any special wish to take that ride to-day?" he asked.

"You wouldn't ask, Uncle Roger, if you'd once seen me behind a good horse."

"Then, Cly, have you a pin anywhere about you, that you could drag Tom up and fasten him to any hour?"

For an instant Tom's face flushed with annoyance, and then he laughed good-naturedly. "Come, Rode, you needn't take me among your anxieties," he protested; but turning to Nabby as she placed the last dish on the table, he sent an order to Adam to have Shanter at the door precisely one hour from that time.

Roger's speech seemed to have "put in a pin" for once at least, and when the hour was up Tom stood

on the doorstep as Adam led Shanter down the drive, his slender neck arching and his thin nostril spreading wide as he forced Adam out of his usual stiff gait into a hobbling little trot.

"In with you, boy," said Tom.—"Hold on there, Adam."

Guy sprang in, and his uncle followed. "Let go," said Tom, and Adam gave the horse his head. For an instant Shanter rose on his hind legs with a quiver that sent a rattle through the harness, and then, like a shot from a bow, was out of the gate and off over the same road Guy had tramped in the morning; past the pushed-out houses and the dahliabed; then over the bridge and past the grove; but instead of taking the turn to the right, as Guy had done, they whirled on till they reached another at the left, took it, and pushed sharply up the long stretch of hill to which it led.

"Yes," said Tom, as the rise let him loosen Shanter's rein; "you're right about that house behind the elms. Built soon after ours, and they took the same plan. Same thing, to all intents and purposes. But not the same people in it, mind you. The Limberthornes and the Hollowblooms aren't cut by exactly the same line;" and Tom laughed as he gave Shanter a quieting word. An ascent of two hundred feet to the quarter-mile didn't very well allow the same speed as a level road.

"Hey, there! Quiet, boy!—Guy, if you ever find

yourself tempted to brag, think of Squire Limberthorne, and that will take it out of you; at least after you know him, and he won't let you stay here long without finding him out. You'll hear of everything he's done, and his fathers before him, for three generations back.—Easy there, Shanter. We've got the top of the hill, to be sure; but never mind."

The top of the hill they had at last, and by a turn of his head Guy could get a wide panorama of the valley behind, with Bolingbroke dropped in the verge, and the thread of a silver stream running through the midst. To the left was the mountain over the "spur" of which Tom seemed to have so many calls, and to the south rose the wavy outline of distant ranges.

"I think we'll take this turn," said Tom. "That fellow with the grape-posts lives just in advance, where you see that red barn, half a mile ahead; but I want to show you one or two of the fine old places I told you of. We'll take the other road, and if we don't go too far on it, we'll find another corner that will double and come back to the red barn just as well."

But when they had seen "the old places," superb rolling farms, with grain-fields and grass-fields that looked fit for tapestry at a royal feast, and sturdy houses settled into the dignity of years, Tom bethought himself of something else Guy must see, and the ride came to an end with no farther vision of the red barn.

It had been a breezy, inspiriting whirl, and the free air and the look-out over the sunshiny world had brought Guy back with a feeling of refreshment that sent him up the old staircase with a light step.

"I believe I've got shaken into new shape," he said to himself. "It's a queer thing how a fellow's own worries seem to dwindle down sometimes with a good square look at other things. Somehow a dose of Bolingbroke doesn't seem quite enough to spoil a lifetime, as it did this morning."

CHAPTER XIII.

BOLINGBROKERS.

BUT a drive over the hills did not come every day, and the "dose of Bolingbroke" began to seem pretty serious again as the week went on.

"It isn't home; that's the trouble, I suppose. I wonder if it ever will be. But whatever it is, I've got to have work to do. I've been visitor three days now, and I think that will do. Aunt Cly seems to be dictator here, as far as I can find out. I must catch my first chance with her, and get one or two things settled."

In the meantime he strolled off for a look at Adam and his work, half envying the stiff, square-shouldered fellow, for knowing what was expected of him, and having a chance to do it. He was the Hollowbloom gardener and groom, at least, and spent his time accordingly. As for Guy's own position in the house, he hadn't succeeded in making that out yet.

Adam and Nabby had come into the family on the same day of the same year; and from that time on there had been perfect harmony between them on

one point—they agreed to disagree, whatever subject came up; and the moment Adam found Nabby excited about the south chamber and its expected occupant, he set himself to bristle the other way, as soon as his own shock of amazement would allow. And now that Nabby stood a complete conquest to the new-comer, Adam's back was fairly up.

"She's that taken with a few civil words," he growled, as he went through his young grape-vines. "She says he's got a way with him. Who hasn't? I'd like to ask. Not that I didn't set store by her that's gone, or didn't bring her to the house in the squire's shay. But there's no call for more boys to the Hollowblooms, as I'm able to see. I'll wait a while, at least."

"What's that you're going to wait for, Adam?" asked a friendly voice from behind; and Adam turned with a start that gave his lame knee a wrench.

"Grape-posts, sir, grape-posts. Not that there's any time to waste in that way; it's enough to drive a man fairly out of himself to see work put out of its place, and everything else tipped over by it, like a row of bricks when one of 'em gets a kick. It's a month now that Mr. Tom's been getting ready to order 'em down, and I thought I had 'em sure when I put Shanter to the waggon that day. There'll be frost in the ground yet, I'll warrant, before I see the bark of one on 'em. I'd have drove Holly out there two weeks ago, if Mr. Tom would have heard to it;

but no, he was going himself, he said ; and now here's Mr. Roger says Holly's going lame, and is to be kept up for a week ;" and Adam's face took on several extra twists as he glanced despairingly around.

"How many do you want?" asked Guy. "There are more ways than one to kill a cat. Can't I help you out?"

"You! Bless your heart!" exclaimed Adam involuntarily, and then hardened up again in all haste. "It's a good three miles out there, and Mr. Tom would sooner let you touch the apple of his eye than that prancing beast of his in the stable." But he let Guy follow him about for the next half-hour with tolerable grace, only glancing now and then at the kitchen-door to make sure that Nabby was not in sight.

When Guy came in, he saw at a glance that his "chance" with Miss Cly was waiting to be seized. She was seated in the high-backed chair where Drake had found her, with a piece of embroidery in her hand ; and he knew that Tom and Roger were not expected until a late tea. But much as he had wanted it, he gave his shoulder an involuntary shrug. He did hate pulling things over the coals. He would so much rather some one else did the talking.

"But if I wait for Aunt Cly!" he laughed, and summoning his courage he dashed into the subject pell-mell.

"Aunt Cly, if you don't like idleness better than I

do, you'll be glad to answer a question or two for me. I want to know what I'm to do?"

Miss Hollowbloom looked up and fastened her eyes on Guy. What a strange, warm feeling of pleasure it gave her to have him come into the room. It was like a touch of something lost long ago—something she had thought would never come again.

"What you are to do? Whatever you like, I hope."

Guy laughed. "Oh, I can't be so lucky a fellow as that. But there must be one thing or another that I *ought* to like, and I want very much to find out what it is."

Miss Cly looked down at the hand Guy had laid on her package of wools. Yes, that was a real Hollowbloom hand, though there was more energy about it than some of the family had. "Perhaps, if you would tell me what you mean, I could answer you," she said.

Guy flushed. If she would only help him out a little, he thought. They were such awkward things that he had to say.

The flush did not escape Miss Hollowbloom's quick eye. "You need not hesitate; we like very plain speaking here," she said.

"Then, Aunt Cly, I want to get to work; but I must find out what I am before I know what to do. I can't be a beggar, and I can't be a burden upon any one. If I haven't anything of my own, I want to

earn my living. If I have, I suppose it would be better to go on with—”

He stopped. With the study his father had meant him to pursue, he was going to say, but he would not speak his father's name where he perceived it was studiously avoided by every one else. But Miss Hollowbloom asked quietly, “To go on with what?”

“With my education. That would make me worth more in some ways by-and-by. But—it is so kind of you to want me here—but I don't see how I *can* take more than that if I haven't any claim. There must be something—some work that I could make myself independent with.”

Miss Hollowbloom tried hard to keep her face immovable, but the faint curl of a pleased smile would steal round her lips. Whatever the boy's father may have been, the Hollowbloom blood wasn't spoiled.

“We never have had a beggar in the family yet Guy,” she said; “and there was a Guy before you who was oldest brother in this house, and as long as it stands, his children will have a share in what belongs to it. Would you like to take up your books to-morrow?”

“If you are sure, Aunt Cly; and if you are sure the others think so too.”

The pleased smile curled in a still clearer line. “The boys? They have no occasion to think of it; they know it, and that is enough. Is there anything else you would like to say?”

Guy sprang up with a happy laugh. "If you would only let me thank you, that's all. I was so miserable, being in suspense. I must have things settled one way or the other. I wanted to know; but I was ready whichever it was. Oh, there is one thing more. I ought to ask Uncle Tom, I suppose, if I could wait. I should like to take a tramp this afternoon. Is there any harm in my leaving a message Uncle Tom didn't get a chance to give when we were out with Shanter?"

Guy had been right in his guess that it wasn't Miss Hollowbloom's way to "tell," and he never suspected that when he was gone she said to herself what she wouldn't say to him—that the only harm in his errand was its taking him away from her. Somehow her wools didn't seem as bright as when he was looking at them, and the whirring of the hour on the old clock seemed only measuring the time till he should come back.

As Guy passed the post-office, or, if the very plain truth is to be told, the village store of which the post-office occupied a corner, a discussion was going on inside, which, little as he suspected it, involved his own name and interest.

"Mr. Guy Powers," the old post-master was saying, as his leather-coloured face and silver-rimmed spectacles looked through the little window together. "Here's a letter backed to that address, and going to the Hollowbloom box. You don't any

of you know of the boys having a visitor by that name?"

There was a stir in the little company gathered on the various boxes, barrels, and other accommodations which the store offered as resting-places for its guests. Visitors were not numerous in Bolingbroke, and a visitor in the Hollowbloom house was an excitement which hardly any of their memories could recall. Yet there was the letter, directed in a firm, elegant hand, and held by the post-master through the little window, that all might see.

At that juncture the door opened, and a flutter of hat ribbon came in.

"There's Drake.—You don't know anything about this visitor to the Hollowblooms, do you, Drake?"

Drake's face lighted suddenly, and a series of nods prepared them for his reply. "He's going to stay there. He belongs to 'em. Didn't you see him come on the train? He's *her* son, you know. *She's* dead, but he's *her* son."

A murmur ran around the crowd as Drake's meaning slowly dawned upon their astonished minds. *Her* son! They knew whom he meant. Going to stay there?

"Who told you that?" asked a half-unbeliever suddenly.

A ringing laugh broke from Drake, and he swung his arms above his head. "If you want to know how the world goes, ask the first man—ask Adam;"

and Drake began humming a tune, apparently forgetting that he had listeners at all. The listeners, however, set up a chorus of their own.

"Another boy at the Hollowblooms."

"Why not?" said Drake. "I like his looks. I reckon the same One made him that made this;" and Drake nodded at a flower in his button-hole—only a red clover from the roadside this time, but a flower of some kind Drake was sure to have.

"Well now, well now. I didn't know they had ever got news from her. I hadn't heard it," said a voice from rather behind the rest. It was Job Hard-luck; he was never in the way of putting himself forward, and this time his round little face, with a colour over the brown like a rosy russet, only peeped over the towering shoulder of Joe Scantling, just in front.

"Pooh, pooh! There's a many things thee doesn't know, Job, like the rest of us," said old Uncle Hookey from his throne—that throne being the one arm-chair the store could boast, at which he had held daily court, at mail-opening time, for many a year.

Job drew back, but Joe Scantling rose from the barrel that he was bestriding, and shook himself.

"Come now, Uncle Hookey, don't be scaring Job. There's one thing we all do know, anyhow; and that is that the Bolingbroke Centennial's a comin' near."

"Pooh, pooh! tut, tut! fiddlesticks!" said Uncle Hookey again. "Bolingbroke is a smart little place

enough, but there's plenty of smarter ones has seen their hundred years, and no fuss made about it. Pooh, pooh! Is it time to dig potatoes, do you think?"

But it was of no use pooh-poohing at the Bolingbrokers: they were too much used to it from Uncle Hookey, in the first place; and this time, as everybody knew, he was in high glee over the new plan himself in his secret soul. Bolingbroke would have finished its first hundred years when the 10th of November should arrive; and if the Bolingbrokers didn't let an idea run away with them very often, they were awake to the excitement for once. And what was of far more importance, so was Squire Limberthorne, in many ways the important man of the village. He had been bustling about everywhere, seeing everybody, arranging everything, making plans, and setting other people to work at them, until everything seemed cut and dried for a turn-out that might well astonish the Bolingbrokers themselves.

"A pretty smart programme, eh?" said another voice.

"Tut, tut! All but the speech-making—all but the speech-making. Pooh, pooh!" said Uncle Hookey again, with a restless thump of his cane.

But why shouldn't there be speech-making? What would a Centennial programme be without that? And yet Uncle Hookey had been fighting it with all his might from beginning to end.

"I'll tell you why. Because I know who'll make the longest one, and I'm tired of it."

Uncle Hookey's audience nodded to each other and laughed. They were tired too, but 'twould be heresy to say so. But Uncle Hookey seemed to have come to the explosive point at last.

"Boys," he went on, with a crowning thump of his cane that fairly pushed a knot-hole through the floor—"fellow-citizens, I say that man is a nuisance."

A nuisance! Squire Limberthorne a nuisance! The man who paid a quarter of the town tax, subscribed to everything, gave the Bolingbrokers their town-clock, and was two or three wheels to the coach in everything they wanted done!

For one instant there was a half-terrified silence; but, after all, the squire wasn't there to hear, and at last one man ventured a nod of approval to his neighbour, his neighbour passed it on to the next, and in another moment a round of applause greeted Uncle Hookey and his daring words.

"Yes," he went on, as the tumult began to subside; "if there's anything more annoying and ridiculous than water in a man's boots, it's a genuine brag, that does better than his neighbours sometimes, and then has to go on for ever talking about it. If a man's afraid his good deeds can't be discovered without his own telling of 'em, they must be terribly small. I'm tired of it, I say."

"Well, I'm afraid you'll have to stand a little taste

of it again before that speech-making is through with," said Joe Scantling, as his razor-like face vanished through the door, radiant with glee at what Uncle Hookey had dared say.

"Pooh, pooh! Is it time to dig potatoes?" said Uncle Hookey again; but as he was always saying "Pooh, pooh!" and had been asking for a month if it was time to dig potatoes, no one thought it necessary to reply; only Job Hardluck got up and followed Joe out of the door.

"Job don't seem to be holding up quite as smart as his way is to-night," said one of those who were left. "This last discharge seems to have pulled him down a bit."

Job meanwhile had certainly lost something of his usual brisk little trot as he made his way towards an old low-roofed house that might have stood in its place since the first of Bolingbroke's hundred years, with its square, gray walls, its monstrous chimney, and the bits of moss and lichens that dotted its sloping eaves. But he forced himself up again as he neared the corner that would bring him to the house. Meg would be listening, and would be sure to suspect something if he didn't come pit-pattering round it with his own step. He stopped a moment, then, with a little shake of his shoulders, took a fresh start and came up all right. The low, square window was in sight now, and the light inside was making shadows on the curtain hung across; a flower-pot with a nod-

ding plant seemed close within; and farther off appeared the figure of a young girl, with one hand outstretched, as if feeling her way. Job went up the steps two at a time, and a low, sweet voice greeted him as he stepped inside.

"Now you never *will* grow a day older, dear father. To hear you come in with such a rattle as that! And so all the world has gone on just the same, another day?" and with unerring touch the hand that had cast the shadow took up its work again as daintily as if God had not thrown a veil over the brown eyes shining just above.

"Oh, the same thing exactly, Meg; not the shadow of a difference to be found if you tried. Just one more of its ways over again, and that's all," answered Job gaily; and Meg laughed a low, musical laugh, and slipped an arm softly round his neck from behind his chair. It seemed to Job as if the words would choke him, and yet he hadn't spoken a word that wasn't true; but there were times when Meg mustn't suspect what the truth really was, and this was one more of them added to the many gone before.

"That must be a little dull for you, then," went on Meg playfully, "since it's changes you're fond of above all."

Fond! Job made a great pretence of clearing his throat, but he couldn't have spoken again at that moment for his life.

There are cloudy days for all of us as we plod through the world, and yet it seems to be remembered that no soul can live quite in the dark ; and accordingly, if the sun goes down, there is almost always a moon, or at least some stars, to come up. But in Job's sky it seemed as if the sun had been entirely left out, and he had to be always hanging up some hope a little way in advance, to make moonlight if it could, or, if pinched down very narrow and small, to dangle as a lantern at least. But pluckily as he went on at this work, there was sure to come an uncertain glimmer or a sudden pop, and the lantern was out, or the moon gone into eclipse ; and there was Job left to scramble about in the dark once more for some new plan or prospect that he could hoist into the place of the old. And these were the changes he had really made Meg think he enjoyed ! His voice never dropped when he told her of a new one, and he always ran the old one down as nothing to be compared with the new.

"And she always shall think so!" vowed Job, with a blow of his fist. "Do I think the good Lord throwed a veil over those eyes of hers for me to go tearing it off, and letting in the dark on that blessed light he keeps a-shining in her soul?"

But the worst of it all, and what made the eclipses so specially hard to bear, was that the hopes Job hung up one by one were always for Meg—always meant something he could do for Meg, if he could

only once get a little more even with the world. Once his plan was to get up a bit of a garden somewhere inside the fence. "Meg do have such a wonderful love for a flower!" But the iron-works where he was teamster, the only place in Bolingbroke where many hands were hired, had been burned to the ground. After that, one little pot of pinks, the very one that was making the shadow on the curtain to-night, was all he could bring home.

"There now! there now!" he said in an ecstasy, as he watched her feeling the buds with her sensitive finger-tips, and laying her cheek over them with a long-drawn breath of delight; "isn't it the most wonderful thing where the Lord do find the making of a soul like that?"

It was some time before Job found work again, and things went a good deal behind meanwhile.

"It'll be no use thinking of any great things for Meg the next time," Job said. "If it could only be a singing-bird now, to keep her spirits up, as you might say, while I'm away. Not that there's one that God's given a sweeter song to than her own; but still, it's past understanding the feeling a bit of music do seem to give her, through and through."

CHAPTER XIV.

GRAPE-POSTS.

ADAM had breakfasted the next morning with some of the wry lines still in his face, and had slammed the kitchen-door behind him to cut off a remark which Nabby was beginning with—"That boy"—when the sound of hoofs and heavy wheels made him turn his head towards the gate.

"If there don't come Harker and those posts! What under the canopy—!"

The wheels crunched over the gravel, and the welcome load stood before Adam's bewildered eyes at last.

"Where have you come from, Thad Harker? Did anything short of that wind that blew your way last night tell you you was wanted down here?" he asked sharply.

Thad looked down from his perch, and winked very slowly at Adam with half-closed eyes, round which long crow-feet spread like fans.

"If you don't want what I've got, I'll take it back," he said at last through a pursed-up little mouth that wrinkled with crow-feet of its own.

"Get down, and hold your tongue," said Adam; "but who ever told you I wanted those posts?"

"Well, if it wa'n't the wind, maybe 'twas the Powers of the air. 'Twas a young fellow said that was his name, at least. Belongs here, don't he?" and Thad cocked his head a little sidewise as he went on with his slow winks.

"Get down, I say," said Adam again; and the load was soon thrown off, but not so easily the disturbance in Adam's mind.

"Walked out there for 'em, did he? Walked out there o' purpose? And smack off, too, without waiting a week after he found out. What did he do it for? That's what I'd like to know."

But even the actual vision of the posts couldn't put the question out of sight, and the answer had to come at last.

"I guess 'twould be hard to tell *what* he did it for, if it wa'n't because you wanted 'em, Adam Gorringer;" and Adam limped slowly towards the house.

'Twas of no use to think of setting the posts alone, while his knee had this fit on. He must get leave to find help. Job Hardluck was out of a job; he'd be the very one. It wasn't every man Adam could work with, but Job would do.

Guy meanwhile stood under the tallest chestnut at the gate, hesitating between the two turns of the road. Could he make up his mind to go and look at that railway station for a change? Suddenly a

strange figure in motley colours and with a hump of some kind on his back came in sight.

"It's that queer fellow Uncle Tom told me of, with his mail-bag over his shoulder. I hope he don't mind being looked at."

Drake certainly could find no fault with that, for his great black eyes were devouring Guy as he came up, while his free hand was gesturing excitedly over his shoulder towards the town.

"Did you get it?" he called out eagerly as he came near. "Did you get it? It's there for you. 'Twas there last night."

"Thank you," laughed Guy pleasantly; "but I haven't heard of anything specially for me."

Drake's gestures grew more vehement as he hurried on. "It's there, I say, right in the Hollowbloom box. You'll find it waiting for you there."

What was the fellow talking about? A letter! Of course it was, and Guy was off like a shot. He remembered that Miss Cly had asked Tom why he had not brought the mail last night.

It was a short mile to the post-office that time. The old post-master had just one second to thrust his brown face through the delivery for a look at the new-comer to "the Hollowblooms," when Guy was off again with his prize. A letter from the doctor. He knew it. He could have hugged it and kissed it too. How could he ever wait to get it home? He couldn't, he wouldn't. He pulled it open on the road.

No, the doctor wasn't angry. Of course not; but it was so good to see it in black and white. And this was the first moment he had by any possibility found to write. Guy might have known that too.

"And why haven't you written us in all this time? I should think you had been spirited away, if there weren't one or two people here who assure me your escort was decidedly flesh and blood. But however you went, you have left a big gap behind; and there seems no way of filling it unless you come back. I'll give them three months to prove that they want you as much where you are; and then if they can't make a good showing of their case, remember I have authority on my side."

Three months! Would three years, or three lifetimes even, make anybody care for him here? Yes; he thought Aunt Cly might possibly care a little after a while; but she would never say so, and it was so good to be told sometimes. He didn't know how nearly starving he was till his letter came.

He folded it, and put it in his pocket at last. What a blessed old fellow Drake had been, to tell! He would go home now, and see if he could get hold of Aunt Cly for another talk. If he was to study, he wanted to begin. He wondered if there was such a thing in Bolingbroke as a school.

For a marvel, at that hour of the morning, Miss Cly was sitting at her table busy with writing; and a sudden anxiety came a good deal like a wet blanket

over Guy's glow. Ought he to speak to her of the treasure in his pocket? Not a word had been uttered since he came into the house that could bear on his life elsewhere, much less upon his father or his father's friends. And yet he must write to the doctor, and must have letters again. It certainly wouldn't be the thing to keep it all out of sight. He came in and laid the rest of his spoils before her.

"Here is yesterday's mail, Aunt Cly; I was at the office, and I ventured to bring it down."

Miss Cly looked up with a shade of surprise. "You at the office? I did not know you had found your way there."

"Oh, it doesn't take long to find the way about Bolingbroke. And"—yes, if the thing was to be done, better do it at once—"I had the good luck to find one for myself; Dr. Holt was so kind as to write."

Miss Cly's eyes could say almost everything, and this time they said she knew very well who the doctor was. She had heard it all when Roger came home, even to the guardianship; the judge had told Roger of that, and she thought it a very wrong thing—unpardonable, indeed—for strangers to have taken upon themselves, without consulting family friends; but she would not stoop to say so to them, now that the thing was done, and she certainly wouldn't say it to Guy. It was no fault of his; and as to his friends, she should not expect to approve of them in any case.

But Guy was waiting for an answer.

"Indeed," she said quietly; "I am very glad, if it pleases you. I"—she hesitated; it was a good deal for Miss Hollowbloom really to say, but she did say it—"I want Bolingbroke to be as happy for you as it can. And about your studies, Guy; I was just trying to see what can be done. You can't get what you will need at any school here, but—have you seen the Limberthorne place?"

Guy laughed. "Yes, Aunt Cly, and heard about Squire Limberthorne too. You don't mean that he would like to turn pedagogue?"

"Nonsense, child!" and Miss Cly laughed too, displaying a superb set of teeth. "But have you seen his brother Nat—Nat Limberthorne? He was intended for more than a pedagogue—a very learned man of some kind. We were all proud of him through his college days, and when they made him professor afterwards. But the poor fellow broke himself down, and there was nothing for it but to come back to the old place and bury himself alive. He mopes miserably, I am told, but always with a book in his hand. If he were only to take a fancy, Guy, it might be a great thing for both of you. I am just writing a note to risk asking."

"Then I'll take myself off, and not interrupt you. I think I'll go and see if Adam won't let me have a dig somewhere with him. May I salute the hand that is taking so much trouble for me, before I go?"

and half-playfully, half in earnest, he stooped and left a light touch on the hand that wore the Hollow-bloom ring."

"How did I ever dare to do it?" he said, as he walked away. "She didn't answer a word, and I'm sure I felt it quiver a little too. I don't believe they ever do such things here. But she is very kind about everything. What if I should never show that I cared?"

The hand had trembled a little, and was trembling still; and Miss Cly was sitting looking at it, with her writing forgotten. No one had touched her with a kiss before, since that day so long ago when the bit of trumpet-vine strayed in at the west-side door.

Guy made his way on toward the garden; he was sure he saw Adam's shoulder rising and stooping, not so very far off. Ah, there he was, digging at the posts. And who was that rosy-cheeked little fellow alongside? Perhaps Adam wouldn't take a third hand.

But Adam took him with a very gracious quaver in his growl. Adam's bark was worse than his bite at all times, and this morning the rough crust was seriously threatening to give way. Guy shovelled away till the morning was nearly gone; and by that time he had at least one more friend in Bolingbroke. Job Hardluck's twinkling eyes were fastened on him until he stumbled over tools instead of using them; but Adam seemed to be too busy with his own reflections to notice it.

"I wish Abigail Granger had had less to say about the boy's having a way with him. I'd like to say it myself if it wasn't for her," he muttered, with a covert peep at Guy.

As the clock struck twelve the last hole was filled in, the last post of the row was set to Adam's satisfaction and pride, and Job gathered up the tools. He would see them safe in the tool-house, to save Adam's knee. As he moved away, Adam turned and pointed to the posts.

"I owe you some'at for these," he said, one eye looking honest thanks at Guy, while the other seemed to wander a little toward the window Nabby was most sure to use.

"Oh, that's nothing," answered Guy; "I was all ready for a walk, and glad I could get them down."

"That's it," muttered Adam again, as Guy followed Job toward the house. "To have anybody that's 'ready' for a thing. It's new times among the Hollowblooms; among the boys, I mean."

Job's step had "brisked up" again, as Nabby would have said, since the night before; but nevertheless Guy overtook him just abreast of the side door. Guy nodded as he turned to go in, and Job raised his cap.

"You live in the queer gray house with the willow at the door?" Guy asked, as Job seemed to be lingering for a farewell word.

"Yes, sir; with Meg, sir; with my daughter Meg;"

and Job drew a step nearer, and lowered his voice. There were very few people he liked to talk to about Meg, but something made him strangely want to speak of her to Guy.

"Your daughter? Oh, I must have seen her then, this morning, standing in the door as I passed by. Some one with very beautiful eyes, at least."

"Do you think so?" asked Job hastily, and pressing still closer, while a quick flush, half of pain, half of pride and pleasure, passed over his face. "Do you really think so, now? And you wouldn't suppose—you never would suppose—there was anything wrong with those eyes?"

"Anything wrong? No, of course not. I wasn't very near, but—why should I?"

Job fell back a pace, and shook his head. "I can't do what I'm always wanting to for Meg. That's where it comes in. There's always something out of reach, you know. But I keep up considerable hope of it yet. Better days coming, you know;" and Job nodded in his turn. He could not realize that any one who knew him did not know about Meg.

"But it's natural," he added, "it's somehow natural, I suppose, that I should want to be doing more for her than would be needed if she could see."

"Can't see!" echoed Guy. "You don't really mean to say that?"

Job shook his little round head again in a way that answered as well as words.

"But something could be done? Of course, something can be done. What doctors have you consulted? Have you tried everything?"

Job staggered back a little, and then stood as if rooted to the ground, gazing into Guy's face with frightened eyes. "Consulted? Tried? Do you suppose there's anything to try?"

"Why, of course. That is—of course I don't know. Only, so many times there is, that's all."

Job rounded the corner, and reached the queer house with his own step once more, but for the first time in his life he stumbled as he went in at the door.

"Why, father! you're not forgetting the way in, after all this time!" laughed Meg.

"Never you fear that. It's more likely I'm getting a little clumsy with age," answered Job gaily; but for the rest of the day he took care to keep out of the way. He could never manage his voice as he ought, with such a whirlpool of new thoughts and feelings underneath. It was the first time it had ever been possible to reproach himself about Meg. But now, to have a stranger ask him if such beautiful eyes might not see, after all, if the right thing were only done!

"And I to have sat here like a stock or a stone, under the shining of a star, and never to have thought of it!" he went on over and over that night, as he stole close looks under the pretty brown fringe of

Meg's lids, until as the evening went on it seemed as if he couldn't bear it another hour. Why shouldn't he speak ?

"Meg," he began softly at last, and then stopped, frightened at the sound of his own voice. Meg was just coming down from the run of a song. She finished it, and turned a pink little ear toward him.

"Meg, would life seem a wonderful, strange, bright thing to you, do you think, if you could come to see after all ?"

"If I could come to see, dear father?" answered Meg, in the same gay lilting tone; and then her voice fell suddenly, and she stood still and turned the brown eyes toward him with a startled look on her face. "If I—could come—to see?" she repeated slowly, and then with a swift, passionate gesture, stretched out her hands toward him with a bitter cry.

"There! there! there!" cried Job in an agony of self-reproach, and tortures couldn't have torn another word from him after that. If it had only pleased the good Lord to take him away from Meg years before, instead of the mother who would have known how to handle a soul like that! But perhaps he should learn some time. Some time, perhaps; and there was time enough to be taken, too, before he need speak of this again; for it would take money to do a thing like that, and where was the prospect of his having money now ?

“If it wasn’t for getting thrown out again, as I am just now. It always makes such a running behind, and I can’t more’n catch up before something happens again. But I will catch up. It shan’t happen again; and then—,” and Job brought his hand down with a heavy blow. What had the Bolingbroke doctors known about it all? They used to look at Meg’s eyes years ago, but they never had said a word.

CHAPTER XV.

DRAKE.

SQUIRE LIMBERTHORNE'S brother, the "college-bred" Limberthorne, as the Bolingbrokers called him by way of distinction, had "pshawed" at Miss Hollowbloom's note, twisted it, crumpled it, stalked about his room, thrown it in the fire, and at last written a very short reply to the effect that if the young man chose to come in, he would assist him as far as lay in his power. Guy lost no time in availing himself of the invitation, and before a fortnight had passed, began to have a comfortable home-feeling among the odd medley of geological specimens, stuffed birds, rare plants, foreign curiosities and books in every language, with which his professor's room was filled from end to end.

"'Buried alive,' Aunt Cly said, and I don't know but he is. I don't believe he ever stirs away from this huddle of things," thought Guy; but after all, he decided, many a tomb might be less agreeable. The forty-paned window swung open in halves, and outside lay the broad velvety lawn, with the great

towering evergreens, and the sweeping elms full of hang-birds' nests. The room itself was long and low, with carved mantle-piece and wainscotting: one of the parlours it had been in olden Limberthorne days.

When Guy first went in, he thought there was no one to be seen; but a tall shadowy figure emerged at last from behind a revolving stand of books, and a brilliant pair of eyes seemed to burn into Guy's face as they studied and scrutinized it without a word. A thin nervous hand pushed back the long black hair from a forehead full of brains, and Guy saw his new master before him.

"Yes, I see!" said Nat Limberthorne, when the eagle look had satisfied him at last, and they began work. It progressed vigorously, and the pushes at the black hair came thicker and faster as every day's lesson went on. When the week was out, Nat sprang to his feet and threw the last book across the table with a spin.

"There's just one thing the matter with you," he said; "you're going to get ahead too fast. You can enter anywhere you like in a year."

In one year! Guy had never thought of less than two. Who could tell, though, what Hollowbloom ideas about "finishing" might be? Perhaps people did not go to college from Bolingbroke. Mr. Limberthorne seemed a perpetual wonder to the Bolingbrokers for having done it himself. But why did he call getting on "something the matter with him"?

It wasn't possible he would be sorry to have him go.

It *was* possible, though. Miss Cly wasn't the only one who was beginning to feel that something was lost when Guy went out of the room.

To Guy himself, as one week followed another in its steady round, the feeling of strangeness seemed to be settling deeper rather than wearing off. There was peace in his heart; the strangeness did not interfere with that. He was trying to "keep close" to the Unseen One; he was trying to be ready and willing for whatever came; but would this new Hollowbloom life ever seem to be really his own? Would the great echoing house ever be home? Would he ever feel that he *lived* in Bolingbroke? And without his father. Was he to go on taking his share of what life might bring, without any part of it belonging to him, and without ever hearing his voice, or seeing that noble, precious face again? The old cry rang through Guy's room now and then still, "Papa! papa!" but it must not be heard anywhere else. He would never speak that name downstairs till it was spoken to him, and he found whether it had the honour that was due.

And so the days went, every one so like the last that Guy was ready to wonder which was which. Tom was always friendly whenever in the house, but he was hardly ever there except at meals. Roger said very little in any way, unless to express a pref-

erence that something shouldn't be done. And as for Miss Cly, Guy felt there was some mysterious understanding between them, and knew she would rather he brought his books to her sitting-room when evening came; but he had to gather it all up by instinct rather than by anything that was said.

But whatever shape things might take, he was determined not to mope—that he *wouldn't* do; and Troy was always ready, if no one else was, for a scour over the country that hunted up some new place every day, and brought Guy back for his books fresh as a lark again.

“Oh, you're a beauty, Troy!” he said, as the graceful hound leaped on him and laid his delicate head first in one hand and then in the other; “and if you don't speak it's because you can't; but there are some people who could, and won't. There, now, be off! Don't you see this is the Limberthorne gate?”

As Guy stepped inside, the squire was just coming out, and greeted him with a profound salute. They had met two or three times before, and Guy had felt a little twinkle in his eye, as even those occasions had given the squire an opportunity to say something pleasant about the Limberthornes in general, not to mention one in particular. This time it was the old elms that gave him his start.

“The oldest trees of the kind in Bolingbroke,” he said, “though the village is indebted to the Limberthornes for several equally fine. Indeed, I myself

have done a great deal toward waking up the people to improvements of that kind ; in fact, my influence, not to say my own efforts, has planted one tree out of five in the town. You have admired our little park, I hope," and the squire graciously closed the gate for Guy..

"Well, why not?" laughed Guy as he went in; "it makes him comfortable and does no one any harm, I suppose."

Lessons were over early that day, and Guy determined on trying a walk he had not quite screwed up his courage to take as yet. He wanted to cross the railroad track and see what lay on the other side; but he remembered the miserable feeling he had had when the train stopped with him that night, and it seemed as if the place must call up the same sensation of strangeness and home-sickness again. However, he was off this time; he and Troy would find out what was over there at last. They set out at a quick pace; it was but five minutes' walk to the station, and they were just at the turn that would take them over the brow of the hill and bring the track into sight, when the sound of voices came up from just in advance. One with its strange high ring he was sure he had heard before; but it was loud and excited now, and rose above the others with a half-appealing, half-defiant cry.

"You won't get it, I say! I tell you, you'll never get it! Hands off! Ha, ha! You'll find who has

the worst of things this time. Drake'll never let go. It's too soon for another evil day! It's too soon."

"It's Drake, poor fellow," exclaimed Guy indignantly. "Uncle Tom told me about that trick. It's a shame, and so silly too."

The next moment the group appeared in sight. Drake's style was made more fantastic than usual by the addition of a dahlia to the sharp-peaked hat, while the flutter of ribbons seemed taking special part in the fray. But his eyes were wild, and his forehead drawn into knots with terror and the use of all his strength. In an instant he caught sight of Guy, and with wild gestures beckoned to him for help.

"Drive 'em off! drive 'em off! I'm tired, I say. They'll never get it, though; they'll never get it. But drive 'em off!"

The attacking party turned and looked at Guy. They knew him; and he recognized them as young men a little older than himself, whom he had seen lounging in the village as he passed. For an instant they hesitated, and then bristling up again, made a show of renewing the attack. Did he think they were afraid of his dog? What business was it of a Hollowbloomer to meddle with them?

Guy had already asked himself the same question, and answered it too; none at all, unless they made it his business. He would try how that was first.

"Come, fellows!" he said pleasantly as he came

up; "don't you think you've had enough of this? It's a case of three to one, you know."

The leader turned defiantly and looked into Guy's face. But that look was the unluckiest thing for him. The contrast of all he saw there with his own coarse cruelty flashed some things into light that he had never seen before, and burning with shame he muttered a few words confusedly and drew off, his companions following with the best show they could make, and disappearing round the turn.

Poor Drake still clutched his mail-bag desperately with one hand, but with the other he caught Guy's, and hugged it and held it to his face.

"I'll always tell you when your letters come. You'll never miss one while Drake's alive. And if you want him to die for you, let him know. That's all! Ah, but I'm tired, I say. It was too soon for another evil day."

Guy saw that the poor fellow spoke the truth: his face was white, and his limbs trembled. Three to one is a hard fight anywhere, but excitement was like fire to poor Drake's brain.

"Hold on," said Guy; "here's a big rock." And Drake sat down, repeating pitifully, "I'm tired—I'm tired, I say. But they never would have got it from Drake."

For an instant the vision of an old harper and his heavy harp flashed upon Guy with a wild pang; but he seated himself by Drake's side. He would try to

get his thoughts away from thieves and robbers by talking about something else. It was slow work, for the fevered brain could not cool at once; but by degrees the wild look faded out of Drake's eyes, and only a little restlessness remained as he turned them upon Guy.

"I like you," he said quickly at last. "I like your looks. I told 'em so up in town the other day. I told 'em I thought the same One made you as made this;" and he pointed to the red clover that happened again to fill his button-hole. "There!" he exclaimed suddenly; "take it. I want to give you something."

Guy took it and placed it in his own coat. "Thank you," he said; "I like it better than anything else you could choose."

A swift gleam of pleasure made Drake's face radiant. "Do you like it?" he said eagerly. "That's good! I like 'em all. That makes me think I should like Him that made 'em; but I don't know."

"You don't know?" asked Guy.

Drake shook his head, and a troubled look overshadowed the light. "How should I? *I* can't! I wish I could, for I haven't any friends. But *I* don't never hear! Other folks go to church, you know."

"And why don't *you*?"

Drake looked at him and broke into one of his

wild echoing laughs, with his arms tossing about his head.

"Look at me! I'm too much dressed, don't you see? I went in once, but they said I was too much dressed, and too queer."

"Who said that to you?" asked Guy impetuously. But Drake started up with a frightened look.

"I'm late. They'll all say I'm late. They never said that before;" and flinging his bag on his back he sped up the road with long swinging strides, nodding over his shoulder at Guy, and throwing gestures back at the clover-head.

Guy stood and looked after him till he was quite out of sight. So that was the way with a poor fellow from whom God had taken his brain and left him only ten times more heart than most of his neighbours had;—one set always ready to terrify him by a stupid joke; and another shutting him out of the sound of Christ's name, because his clothes had a few more colours than their own.

"Don't they see his clothes every day and think nothing of them?" he asked indignantly. "And if they don't want him in church, why don't they at least teach him somewhere else? No one thinks it his business, I suppose."

Troy and his master explored the region beyond the track, and found the country different from the part of Bolingbroke Guy had already seen. They found a low fertile valley, through which the silver

thread of a river ran; and upon which after a time rose suddenly, like a wall, the mountain spur over which Tom so often disappeared. What lay on the other side of the mysterious boundary Guy would find out some other day. It was too late this afternoon.

But at every step Guy was haunted by that look on Drake's face when he said, "How should I? I can't." It was like Lazarus sitting outside the gate while the feast went on within. But that wasn't the only thought that came up; another one began to steal in before long. If "nobody thinks it his business" would condemn other people, why shouldn't it do the same for him? If "somebody" ought to help Drake out of the dark and his lonely heathenism, why not himself?

"Oh, but *I* can't," he said, unconsciously quoting from Drake. "How could *I* ever do such a thing? If papa were only here! *He* could make it all so plain, and so lovely too. But I! And besides, I'm only a stranger among all these people. I can't be a meddler. The rest of them have known Drake all his life."

He whistled to Troy, and they set off on a run. But that didn't leave the question behind. It followed on and stuck close. The rest had always known Drake? Well, supposing they had, that didn't prove he had ever said to them what he happened to say to Guy. And after all, what had any of those

things to do with it? If there was work to be done—the old echo came suddenly in: “Ready and willing!”—“There never was but one Man who was always that; but love him, worship him, follow him close.”

He roused himself up and went on with firmer step. Yes, ready and willing he *would* be. Was he near forgetting that? If the Master would only give him strength—only show him what he really ought to do.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE VIOLIN.

THE fortnight that lessons and walks had passed away for Guy had dragged heavily enough for poor Job Hardluck. The eclipse was holding on still, and the "change" this time seemed to consist of waiting for what didn't come, and keeping up such a tone in his voice, meanwhile, as should prevent any suspicion on Meg's part that he didn't like it.

But Job was well drilled in both these arts, and worked away bravely at them both, though that didn't make the drag on himself any the less. And indeed the talking gaily to Meg when his heart was like lead was the sharpest pull of all. But knives or razors would not have been too sharp for Job if they had made things any better for Meg; and after all, there was only one thing that it seemed as if Job could not bear. That was the tumult that had come up in his mind after those few words of Guy's—the intolerable feeling that possibly something such as he had never dreamed of might be done for Meg, and that he had needed to have a stranger tell

him of it; and, now that he was told, that the prospect of ever earning the money seemed drawing further and further away every day.

But never mind! He'd find work somewhere somehow. If any one thought Job Hardluck was going to give up, or not keep his hope-lantern dangling ahead, that person was very much mistaken.

"Now there's Adam Gorringer," he said, as a third Monday morning came round and Bolingbroke as yet offered nothing that could be called work; "I'll just make him a call, and talk over things a bit. There may be some little job he'd like done once more, and there's no harm in putting out an oar on any side. He may be in the way of knowing of something now that I could get for a steady pull." And Job set off with his round face rosy and his little eyes twinkling still.

Adam pushed back his hat and rubbed his hair reflectively. "Now I'd give a good deal if I did know of some'at," he said. "There's none too many men like you in Bolingbroke, and it's poor doing if the whole town can't make a place for one of 'em when he's in need." But rubbing his hair didn't seem to produce anything from either the back or the front of Adam's head. The Bolingbrokers who employed hands were few, and openings were proportionately far between.

"Oh, it'll all come right; it'll all come right,"

answered Job cheerfully, though he watched with an eager look to see if Adam wouldn't drop a word about some little piece of work of his own. If he didn't, though, Job would never ask.

"What's that that's all coming right?" asked Guy's voice from behind; and Job turned with a sudden glow and a sudden twinge at once.

"'Twould be so wonderful cheerful if I was just to run across him again," Job had said as he came in at the gate; but at the same time the sight of Guy brought up all the idea about Meg again.

"Why, here's Job out of a place, sir; that's what's the matter," Adam explained. "Perhaps you don't know just what that is to a man as supports his family with his hands; but it's a bad job."

"Oh, but it'll all come right," said Job again. "It never failed yet—never yet."

"That don't prevent its being ugly while it lasts, though, I suppose," said Guy. "I wish I were in the way of knowing of anything.—Adam, isn't there some bit of work around the place that your knee won't do?"

"Why, now I think of it," said Adam, with the sudden gleam of an idea untwisting his face; and Guy left Job delightedly "falling to," as he himself started off for the Limberthorne place. Only Job would have given anything to ask him a little more about Meg; but, alas! 'twas of no use yet.

"There's the squire at the gate again," he said;

"standing still this time. And what's he knocking the gravel about with his cane for, at such a rate? I've heard he gets hot once in a while; but he's always been jolly to me. Something's gone the wrong way, I guess."

"Yes, young man," answered the squire as Guy lifted his cap and remarked that it was a very pleasant day. "Pleasant day enough, sir, I suppose, if everything wasn't at sixes and sevens in the world. Here's my man Diggory that has kept my place in order and known every blade of grass that's grown on it for fifteen years, and now must take up a notion to clear out when he thinks he can better himself with a farm of his own, or some nonsense of that sort. As if he'd do better on the face of the earth than he would with a Limberthorne! I've told him to be off, though I don't know where there's another to fill his shoes; but I'll find one, to spite him, before he's fairly out at the gate—before he's out at the gate!" and the squire gave the gravel another thump.

"I heard a very good man asking for work not ten minutes ago," answered Guy, keeping his excitement as coolly out of sight as he could.

"You did! Not ten minutes ago! Where is he? What's his name?" exclaimed the squire, seizing Guy by the button in his haste.

"Job Hardluck. I left him giving Adam a lift as I came away."

"Job Hardluck! I know him. I'll have him here in half an hour." And releasing Guy's button, the squire strode off.

Guy looked after him amused, but the pleasure about Job covered all the rest. "The best piece of luck I ever had in my life. He'll take him, I'm sure of it. And as for these little hot-pops, they're soon over, Uncle Tom said. At any rate, Job'll have the honour of working for a Limberthorne!" and Guy sprang up the steps and settled to work with a gay heart.

Meg heard some one springing up the steps too, soon after twelve o'clock struck, and Job came scrambling in with such a scurry that she laughed outright.

"To think of your talking about getting clumsy with age," she said; and this time there was no forcing in the way Job chimed in with the laugh.

"Yes, but now! now! now! Haven't I told you many a time there was nothing so good as a change? And now here I am at this very moment engaged to Squire Limberthorne for all the year round if I suit, and wages better than I ever got them since I was a young man. What have you got to say to that, Meg? Is there anything in particular you would like to say to that?"

But Meg only put her arms softly round his neck. "If it pleases you, dear father, if it pleases you, that's all."

If it pleased him ! Job could hardly keep his step steady enough as he went round the room. If he were to come too near to prancing about, Meg might begin to notice the contrast with even the very best he had been able to do for the last week.

"Now I can talk to the young Hollowbloom, and the first time I see him, too," he said to himself. "Now I can ask him what he knows about doctors down in the city, and their ways. There's no better paymaster in this town than the squire, and let me once catch up, and what do I want for money except for Meg ? And the Limberthornes stand like the everlasting hills ; there's no danger of my getting tipped over again, if I only can suit. He's peppery, that's true—the squire's peppery ; but Diggory's held on fifteen years, and I'll walk as if 'twas on eggs."

For some reason Guy did not feel in the spirit of his walk that afternoon. He came in early, and looked into the sitting-room for Miss Cly. Her chair was empty. He tried the dining-room, and then called under the window of her room. There was no answer, and he passed round to the long stoop and the door of Nabby's kitchen.

"The whole family isn't lost or buried, is it, Nabby ?" he asked. "I can't make anybody hear."

"Indeed, sir," said Nabby, growing radiant as she always did when anything brought "young master" in her way, "you may think it a wonder of the world, but Miss Hollowbloom's got on her hat and

gone out to pay a call. Mr. Tom, he's away with Shanter; that is nothing very new, I suppose. And Mr. Roger had a call to the office an hour ago;" for, as Guy had found out only a few days before, Roger was justice of the peace and general legal adviser to Bolingbroke; but as the business gave altogether more recess than work, his office was ordinarily locked, an understanding being established with the Bolingbrokers that he could be summoned when occasion required.

"Would there be anything I could do for you, sir?" asked Nabby.

Guy thanked her, but there was nothing; and he went up to his room wondering how he had ever thought the house solitary when Miss Cly was at home, it seemed so absolutely empty and forsaken now. As he closed his door his eye fell upon his violin. He had not looked at it or opened the case since he came to the Hollowbloom house; it seemed as if he could not let any one there hear its sound. But to-day a sudden feeling that he could and would take it out seized him.

"Did not papa say he took it when he wanted the past brought near? I wonder if I dare try. It seems so far away now; wouldn't it mock at me if I brought it back? But no. I will not let anything of papa's be far away that I can possibly hold on to. And we loved the violin together, and he always wished me to work faithfully at it, and be master of it some

day, as he was himself. No one will listen ; the house is empty, and I need not think of any one but papa."

He opened the case and looked lovingly at the instrument where it lay. How well he knew every line and cut on the richly carved neck, every feature of the half-stern, half-jovial face that bent over the top. The dark lines, the faded varnish, the nameless inside tints that told its age and its precious history, even if there had been no traditions to bring it down, through one lover's hands and another's, from the famous maker whose genius had given it its wonderful tone, to be at last one of the few treasures of his father's life. He lifted it with a sudden pang at the thought of its being his alone, that there was never to be any sharing any more.

But he started up suddenly and shook that off. "What does papa want of it any more? Hasn't the blessed Master made up all his poverty to him at last? He was so patient with it all; he was always helping some one else if not himself; and hasn't he everything that could possibly be given him of joy or riches now? What does he want of the poor little violin? No. If he remembers, he is glad it is mine, but that's all. And I—he wanted me to be always like it in one way—ready and willing, and with no jangling out of tune."

He placed a piece of music before him, a low, soulful movement, that he had heard so many a time when his father wanted rest.

"I can't play it as papa did. I shall never do that." But the strains were sweet and true; and as the movement went on, the yearnings and the longings in the boy's heart were soothed and fed. The dear old life, the dear old room, almost his father's very presence seemed brought close once more. He forgot the Hollowbloom house; he did not see the eyes that looked down and followed him from the picture of the other Guy; and he did not hear Miss Cly's step as she came up the stairs and, pausing a moment near his door, went noiselessly to her own room close by. He forgot there was no one in Bolingbroke who could ever know or understand anything that had ever been dear to him. All that was dreary and hard went out of sight, and home and rest and sympathy came in. It almost seemed as if his father must be listening too; as if his hand must be ready to take the bow and show Guy how to bring more soul out of a strain.

The old clock downstairs swung its long pointer further and further round; it had swept almost the hour, and Guy still played on. His eyes were bright and his head erect; he was Guy Powers once more, and gone back to his own life. He was not asking himself whether he had any "claim" on any one or not.

But suddenly there was a sound in the hall. He started and came to himself as if out of a dream. He saw the walls of his room, and the great eyes of

the picture, and the antlers and the fishing-rod, where they hung. It was Roger's step and voice; what was he coming this way for? He had not known him come to this end of the hall since he had been in the house.

Roger paused, as Miss Cly had done, as he came near the room, hesitated a moment, and then turned to Miss Cly's room.

"What is the boy doing there?" he asked in an irritated tone. "Does he expect to deluge us with that fiddle of his? I was very near telling him not to bring it at all, but I had no idea he could play on the thing, and I thought I'd let it go. You'll have to see to it, Cly. If you want the boy here himself, well and good, but a fiddle is nuisance in a house."

The words were not really meant to go through Guy's door, but they cut their way, every one, clear and plain. Did Guy see the four walls of his room now? They stood round him hard and cold, as if they were chiselled of stone; and his eyes, that were bright before, were flashing and blazing now. With head thrown back and features white and sharp-cut he threw open the door and confronted his uncle where he stood!

"Uncle Roger, if you find me, or anything belonging to me, a nuisance in your house, it is not necessary to go to Aunt Cly. You have only to say so to me, and I will relieve you instantly. I am not a beggar.

I did not come here to please you or myself, and I will go any moment you may wish. I have friends who do wish for me; and I have head and hands to earn my own place in the world. Why didn't you tell me you hated my violin? It would never have come here, more than the cabinet that you refused. Both of them were sacred, and are so still, to one whom you never knew, and never could know; and neither of them shall be seen nor heard where they cannot be regarded for his sake. But no one shall speak against them, either—no one, ever where *I* can hear;" and he went back into his room and hastily closed the door.

There was silence a moment, and then he heard Roger give a long whistle; and then his firm, measured step, sounded as he went away through the hall and down over the winding stairs. Guy knew where he had gone: there was a small library opening from the dining-room, where it seemed to Guy he was for ever sitting with a book, and which was used as an office when business calls came at the house.

Guy put the violin back in its case, locked it in, and walked about his room with his heart beating violently and his face burning with indignation and pain. "It is *too* much," he said. "It is more than I ever will bear. He knew it was papa's violin—he *must* have known it; and he must have known I loved it for his sake. It shall never come out again in this house. Why couldn't he have waited a little

bit? He would have found I never touched it when I knew he was within hearing. If he doesn't want me here, that is enough to bear; but I can't blame him for that—that has to be settled with Aunt Cly. But he should not insult papa's things. I believe he hates it because he knows it was papa's. I'll ask Aunt Cly if *she* wants me here; and if she doesn't I'm free."

But a little time of this was enough. The heat of anger cooled, and the sharpness of the sting of pain quieted down. He *knew* Miss Cly wanted him; he knew what his mother had wished, and all the reasons that had settled the whole thing once for all. And he knew something else besides that, too. He had been more than indignant; he had been angry, very angry, and had spoken to Roger with the very rudeness that he had so resented when it had touched himself.

"Oh, what would papa say? And it isn't an hour since I was thinking of what he begged me to do. Out of tune? Oh, that's no name for it. It's been more than that. I had a right to feel annoyed, indignant, perhaps; but I hadn't a right to burst out upon Uncle Roger like that, or to—*almost* hate him, as I'm afraid I did. And it was kindness in him—I can see that now—that he couldn't quite make up his mind to tell me to leave it behind. Was it I who was talking the other day about teaching Christianity to Drake? What would Uncle Roger

think of that, if he found it out? And what does the Master think—he who never once in all his sorrowful life answered angrily, or hated the cruellest soul he met? Oh, I must ask him to forgive me and help me.”

A little time passed, and Roger heard a quick step coming over the stairs and towards the room where he sat, and he gave another low whistle to himself.

“Isn’t the boy satisfied yet? Does he want to let off another breeze?” he said; but Guy was knocking at the half-open door.

“Come in;” and Guy pushed it open.

“Uncle Roger, I was very wrong, and I had no right to say what I did. I wouldn’t be in your way here if I could help it, that is true. But I shouldn’t have been angry when I said so. I am very sorry, and I hope you won’t lay it up.”

Roger looked up from behind his book and laughed. “Do you know, boy, I like you better than I ever did before? You’re more of a Hollowbloom than I thought, and I like you for it. I didn’t mean what I said for you, of course; but since you got it, I like you for facing up. Here’s my hand;” and Roger held it out.

Guy did not see Miss Cly alone again that evening, for tea was on the table before he had time to go up-stairs; and though Roger spent the evening in his library, Tom stayed at home in one of his most talkative moods. But Guy knew by the way his aunt’s

eyes flashed up from her work, and then dropped again on it with almost closed lids, only to lift suddenly with more light than before, that she would have something to say if the opportunity were only given. In some of those flashes the eyes made pretty searching scrutiny of Guy's face. Part of what they saw there Miss Cly could read, and part she could not. A sorrowful and a peaceful look at once—Miss Cly did not know exactly what to make of that. The boy was hurt, of course he was hurt, she thought; she was only afraid it was a wound that wouldn't heal. She had measured his spirit in that talk about having "a claim," and she knew it was as high as Roger's or her own. But a thing like this should never happen again. Roger should understand for the future that whoever hurt the child hurt *her*. But still, what gave him that quiet, satisfied look with it all? Had he made peace with Roger already? Was it that?

No; Guy was thankful for that, of course, but it wasn't the secret under all. He had made peace with some One else; that was what was making him strong again. How could he ever have cared what a wilful man like Roger chose to say, when he knew that the love and friendship, the close holding of the *Wonderful One* were his, if he only would not let them go out of sight? And now, with the Master's hand helping and the discord driven away, why should there not be peace?

But when Guy said good-night, Tom yawned and said he would follow lead; and Guy had hardly closed the door of his room when there was a knock, and he knew it was Miss Cly.

"Oh, never mind, Aunt Cly!" he exclaimed, as he saw the troubled look on her face. "Don't think of it again, as far as Uncle Roger is concerned. But *I* was very wrong. I've begged his pardon; and I beg yours. If you'll be patient with your boys, they'll get grown up after a while and do better;" and Guy laughed pleasantly.

"Wrong!" exclaimed Miss Cly. "Guy, I would not have you hurt in this house for all, more than all, it contains. Why hadn't you told me about your violin?"

The moisture sprang to Guy's eyes, and his lips quivered. "Because, Aunt Cly, it was papa's, and I knew no one could understand. I meant never to speak his name here; but I have done it at last. He was *so* good, *so* noble, *so* glorious in his soul! He taught me everything you can ever find in me to love, and a thousand times more that I have only half learned. He taught me to be a Christian; and if you don't find me one, you may know that it is not his fault."

Miss Hollowbloom's face had flushed at the sound of that name that she had been as determined as Guy not to speak, and her eyes dilated as Guy went on. Was he saying all this about "*that man*"?

"And it was because the violin was his that I couldn't bear to hear Uncle Roger speak so about it. He loved it, and he loved the—the—"

"The cabinet," finished Miss Cly. "Now, Guy, tell me what that means."

Guy hesitated. "Indeed, Aunt Cly, it's of no consequence. I was a little sorry at the time, but I really think it's better as it is."

"Tell me, Guy," repeated Miss Hollowbloom quietly.

"Well, then, I meant to bring it, but Uncle Roger thought there was no room."

"No room!" Miss Cly's eyes shone again, and Guy went hastily on,—

"He thought it was better left behind; and indeed it is well taken care of. It is quite valuable in itself, I believe; and I had packed a good many things in it—things of mamma's, and others that I wanted—that I hoped—"

"That you wanted to bring with you," exclaimed Miss Cly; "that you treasured and loved, and ought never to have been separated from. I will send for it to-morrow. It shall come at once."

Guy begged and entreated. He did not miss it so very much now; he was quite used to missing it, at least; and Uncle Roger would think he meant to defy him. Indeed it would be much better not; at least, not for a little while.

"I will see about that," answered Miss Cly. "What

is it to Roger? It's a foolish way he has of always thinking he would rather not have things done; a mere habit and notion, and he has no conception what trouble it makes. He ought to have outgrown it long ago. And now, Guy, about this violin—"

It was Miss Cly's turn to hesitate now, and Guy was as quick at reading secrets as she, and he felt a hot throb through his veins. But he answered gently; he couldn't do otherwise to her.

"You don't want to hear it yourself, Aunt Cly, because it was *his*. Don't be afraid. I shall never let a sound come from it again in this house."

"Guy," exclaimed Miss Hollowbloom hastily, "tell me—Why did he keep back that letter all these years?"

"Because he did not know there was such a letter. He did not find it until just before—before I lost him."

"Did not know?—did not find it?" repeated Miss Cly slowly.

"No; it was in her portfolio, and he had put that out of sight—he could not bring himself to open it. But I think something made him at last; something was getting him ready to go, though he didn't know, and he talked to me about it the very last night. He wanted me to consent—to feel that it was right that it should be sent; but I—"

"You could not?"

"I was terrified; I thought it was something to separate me from him."

"And how did Judge Throckmorton come to have it at last?"

"I gave it to him. I told him papa wished it sent. And he did wish it. He said it was right; and whatever was right was law to his soul. And I sent it because he taught me—he tried to teach me that very night, and when he was so tired, so tired that he was ready to die, to be—"

Guy lowered his voice and went on,—

"To be ready and willing for whatever was right; whatever could bless any one else. And oh!"—he stopped and steadied himself again, but broke into a cry at last.

"O Aunt Cly, he died at last because he helped a poor old man that he had never seen before, who was nothing to him except as he called him a brother. And I might have had him all this time, if it hadn't been for that. But I am glad—I am glad. I am glad there never was the first time that he refused to help."

Miss Cly's breath came quickly, and it seemed as if her eyes would burn into Guy's. Was this the man she had thrust from her mind all these years as the ideal of whatever was base? Was this the truth about the letter, whose delay she had felt deserved no mercy and was the crown of all his sins? And all this time he had been teaching Christianity to his boy. She would have said she was a Christian if any one had asked her, but she had been forgetting

that charity in thought of others was one of the first duties in that law.

"Guy," she said, in a low, strange voice, "I want you to use your violin whenever you wish, in my house. And I want you to know that you and your happiness are very dear to me. And if there is anything to be forgiven—"

"Forgive me, Aunt Cly. You have not known. You have not understood. How should you? Some time perhaps I can tell you, if you are willing to hear. And you are so very, very kind to me. I could not have done without some one to be kind."

"But I can never take out the violin again," he said slowly when she was gone. "She is very good. I almost believe she loves me—if she would only say so; but I must put the violin out of sight."

CHAPTER XVII.

TEMPLES.

THE next morning seemed to Guy the clearest and most perfect that had dawned since he had begun to watch them from the east window of his new room. The glory of autumn woods was just giving signs of its approach; for this was the third Sunday of his life in Bolingbroke, and October was opening with its fairest face. Every gleam of colour in the outside world Guy caught at, as so much warmth and life to make up for what was wanting inside the house; though, to any average Bolingbroke mind, a visitor at the Hollowbloom house who should talk of anything wanting there, would stand suspected of madness at once. Was there not the stately old parlour with its mahogany furniture covered with cream-coloured embossed velvet, and standing, every piece, precisely where it had stood for fifty years, on a Brussels carpet of the very same colour and shades? Were there not family portraits and hunting scenes in the great echoing hall? and were there not old engravings scattered here and there, and fruit-pieces

on the dining-room walls? silver table service in the panelled closet, books in the library, carved balusters and broad landings to the old stairway, and everything in its place everywhere? What more could any one ask? And as for the family, aside from Nat Limberthorne, Roger Hollowbloom was the only "college-bred" man in town; and Tom was the friendliest, most talkative fellow about; while Miss Cly always wore silk, and had manners that disturbed a good many of her neighbours because they were finer than their own.

What was it that kept such a strange feeling of emptiness and echoes and hard walls, everywhere, for Guy? It was not home yet. He kept trying to say that over to himself, but he knew very well it was not all.

There was a Hollowbloom pew in church, on the right hand of the middle aisle, and with cushions and footstools of the same cream-coloured velvet that covered the parlour suite. The pew was punctually filled, as a matter of course, and for the first two Sundays of Guy's appearance there was a great wandering of eyes toward it. Events were not too frequent in Bolingbroke, and the news about the Hollowblooms had created quite an excitement. To-day the edge of curiosity seemed somewhat worn off, and Guy felt the half-consciousness of being observed exchanged for the pleasanter one of being let alone. The organ was a little wheezy and out of tune, and

the choir seemed to give more prominence to force than to soul; but there was one voice that floated over the others in a rich flood, its pure, melting notes, reaching the depths of Guy's heart and lifting it again in joyful praise. Was not the tribute in that one voice rare treasure to the listening Lord of the temple? Adoration, penitence, joyous worshipful love were outpoured in it. How many a dull, narrowing heart below did it stir and bear away with it as it rose?

The voice was that of Meg—only Job Hardluck's Meg. Who had ever taught her to sing? How had such a soul as that grown up behind those darkened eyes?

The sermon was not specially refreshing to Guy. Mr. Lake, the Bolingbroke preacher, who lived in one of the cottages Guy would have liked if it had not been for the queer paint, and whose simple sermon had given Guy a feeling of rest and help even on his first Sunday, had disappeared, and some one had taken his place who was showing with a great deal of labour what had probably become of the lost ten tribes. Somehow Guy could not help thinking a great deal of some one else who was lost. "Oh, if papa were only here to talk to these people," he said to himself. "He would not talk to them about any one but 'the Master.' He always called him 'the Master,' because—" And Guy lost track of the wanderings of the tribes as one well-remembered

sentence after another came silently back to his mind. "Because only His hand can bring the full harmony out of the soul"—"Because only His training can keep every chord in tune"—"Because only His ear can listen perfectly"—"Because only by learning of Him, by following Him, can we take our part in the movement of His world."

The great Hollowbloom pew seemed as little like home as the house itself at first; but the more the familiar thoughts came in, the more rest and comfort came too. Was it not home anywhere where the Wonderful One would come?

The bell in the square little tower rang for the second service at an early hour, and it was early still when the last words of the closing hymn melted away in Meg's voice. At that moment Guy caught sight of a flutter of hat ribbons just vanishing past the window. It was Drake, of course. Which way was he going? Had he been standing outside, with that hungry look on his face that Guy had seen? Had he heard Meg sing? And if he had, even if he had caught the words, what meaning could they have carried to him?

Guy had not forgotten him all this time—there was no danger of that; and his mind had been made up.

"I'm just going to help that fellow, if I can. He's starving, and we've all got bread and to spare. I hate the idea of 'preaching,'—that's what people would call it, I suppose; but nobody'll have a chance to call

it anything, so it's no matter about that. Only it ought to be some one with a hundred times more sense than I; but I can't help that. If that some one don't do it, I'm ready to try. I must be ready, if no one else will. The great trouble is to get at him, though. He don't live anywhere, as far as I can find out; and when he once gets that mail-bag on his shoulder, he's like the wind."

But there was no mail-bag this time, and Drake was wandering aimlessly on, taking his every-day route from force of every-day use. He had stopped at the corner of the church and listened, as he went by; it was the last verse of the hymn, and Meg's voice clear through the rest, that he heard. He could not hear the words, but he stood still with a strange stir in his soul. Not that it was anything new. Many and many a Sunday he had stolen to the same spot, just at the corner under the eaves, where no one was likely to see, and where the deep roll of the organ and the rise and fall of the voices could reach his ear; and always the same strange thrill, the same tumult that he could not understand, roused at the sound. Was it pleasure, or was it pain? He hardly knew, but he liked it. He must have it again. Would there be more if he could get inside? he wondered.

To-day he had lingered longer than usual, and crept a little further out of his shelter toward a point where a window came in view.

"*He's* in there, I suppose," he said, with a gesture toward the wall, and straining his eyes toward the window. "I'd like to see him again. *He* said he thought I might go in." But Drake shook his head and broke into a long but noiseless laugh. "*I* can't," he said; "I'm too much dressed."

When Guy came out, his first thought was to look down the road in the direction Drake had taken. That was toward the Hollowbloom house and the railroad track, and Drake was walking at a slow gait for him, and apparently not dreaming that churchgoers were dismissed. Guy kept up with Tom's chat as they walked along, but he was measuring paces with Drake all the time.

"He'll be well in sight when we reach the gate. I'll try for a little walk with him," he thought; and saying so to Tom, he stopped as Tom turned into the grounds.

"You'll have merry company," laughed Tom. "That's a queer conceit."

Guy smiled in response. "Oh, he did me a good turn about a letter the other day, and we scraped a kind of friendship. I thought I'd like to try him again. Perhaps I shan't make out much."

"Well, there's little enough to try in Bolingbroke," said Tom. "Off with you!"

There was no trouble about overtaking Drake. He was stopping with a sudden look at his button-hole. The flower had fallen out, and he stooped to search for another.

But Drake's ear was as quick as a deer's; he turned at the sound of Guy's step, and a look of delight shot across his face.

"Aha! aha!" he cried, standing erect and looking eagerly at Guy. "It was *you* I wanted; it was *you*. I tried, but I couldn't look in. You did me a good turn, and I wanted to see you again. I'd like so much to have a friend, you know. I never had one yet."

"When? Where did you look for me?"

"Were you there? I thought you were there—in the church, I mean, in the church."

"Yes, I was there, and I wished you were too," said Guy.

Drake shook his head, and the troubled look darkened his face again. "*I* can't, you know, *I* can't."

"But there are plenty of other churches, Drake, where you might."

Drake fixed his eyes eagerly on Guy's face.

"Don't you know a church is a place where people learn about the One who made your flower, and where they worship him? Many a time people have used a wood no finer than that one just round the turn for a temple, and been very happy in it too. You and I might call it a church, and go down there now and then, and I'll tell you what I know about Him, if you like. Didn't you say you wanted to hear?"

Drake seized Guy's coat and held him as if he were afraid of seeing him disappear. "*Now?*" he asked excitedly; "will you go now?"

"Why, yes, of course," said Guy; "only we must go quietly. People always go quietly to church, you know."

Drake dropped his coat and walked on by his side like a child, only glancing up in his face now and then with a still, eager look, or in a lowered voice answering something that Guy said.

It would have been hard to find a more perfect temple "not made with hands." The great trunks of the tall pines rose like pillars, stately and still, and not a footfall could sound on the sifted carpet they had spread, or on the green moss and trailing vines that cushioned a wind-blown spot here and there. An eternal hymn was whispering overhead, and a clear blue canopy hung above all. Would not He who had said, "Lo, I am with you alway," draw near in such a place?

Drake gave another of his eager looks at Guy. "I like it here; I've been here many a time. I always like it."

"Do you?"

But Drake did not wait to answer. "Are you ready?" he said. "Will you tell me about Him now?"

Ready! How strangely that word struck upon Guy—his father's watchword coming from this poor, hungry heart of Drake's.

"Yes, I'm ready, Drake," he answered hastily. "Sit down here, and I'll tell you what I can. There's a great deal, you know—too much for any one day. But did no one ever tell you anything at all?"

Drake nodded. "Yes, long ago. They told me everything then, but it's too long ago."

Guy remembered what some one had said—that Drake's memory was strong and clear since the great blow that fell upon him, but the years passed before that were a blank.

"Did you know, Drake," said Guy slowly—"did you know that He came here once?"

The imbecile's face clouded with wonder, almost with incredulity; but it cleared again, and a childlike delight shone in his eyes.

"*You'll* tell me the truth; *you* won't tell me anything but the truth."

"Never a word but the truth, his own truth, Drake, that he has told us. It is wonderful, that's true, and one of his names"—and once more memory flew back to that sorrowful last night—"one of his names is *the Wonderful One*."

"He *is* wonderful, Drake. He is so great and so glorious; and yet his greatest name is Love. Did no one ever tell you of that? and how that brought him here to stay a little while and teach us to love one another as he loved us? *He* loved his enemies, Drake. Do you think many of us can do that?"

"But not me," interrupted Drake—"not *me*. I

wish it was, for I haven't got friends, you know. And that's what I always want; I want somebody to be my friend. But *he* couldn't; he'd say I was too queer;" and the tears sprang to the imbecile's eyes.

"Drake," said Guy gently, "he was tenderest of all to the weakest and to the little ones. See! I will read you about it;" and taking a little Testament from his coat, he found a place.

This was the boy's beginning. Shrinking at first from the task as a strange one, beyond his wisdom and strength, but ready and willing because he *would* be so, because Drake wanted him, he felt his way step by step. But as one Sunday after another brought the two together in their hiding-place, Guy felt himself not only wondering that it should ever have seemed hard, but anticipating the day almost as much as his pupil himself. Drake's eager, hungry eyes, his answering look, the quick, bright smile, and the grieved and tearful face with which the "old, old story" was received, the earnest gestures and the questions thrust at Guy in eager haste—how could it be anything but a delight to meet and answer these?

"And it isn't all on his side, either," thought Guy. "Twill be strange if I can't learn a few lessons as I go along. The fellow has such a way of believing, just like a little child. And I never saw such a grateful soul. What is it for me to try to give him

this little help? Nothing at all. But I don't know but he would lay down his life for me to-day. And as for the One who *did* lay down his life for him, I believe Drake worships his very name already. They say it's in a nature like his to love and to hate; but when I tell him the Master says anything is right, that seems to settle it, even to forgiving the fellows that tease him with his mail. That *was* a hard struggle at first; but he does it, I really believe.

"But this thing can't go on much longer," Guy said again. "Some one who can do better than I ought to come in here; and besides, another fortnight or so is going to freeze out all idea of talks under trees. What's going to be done then? Drake must go to church, that's the long and short of it. It isn't possible any one really objects. It must have been just another silly teasing, like robbing his bag. There's Mr. Lake; doesn't he ever think of a poor creature like Drake, that's just starving for kindness and a chance to give it back?"

CHAPTER XVIII.

JOB HARDLUCK.

OTHER days besides Sundays had been slipping by, and the first flush of October glory had reddened into its deepest dyes, and a tawny russet was threatening to deaden the yellow and gold. Job Hardluck had been busy as a beaver at his new work, and had found himself getting on quite smoothly with his new master; he was determined upon that, and he had been about the place enough in Diggory's day to get pretty good hints of how it was to be done. Everything was to look well kept up at all times, but never more than one piece of work must be really in hand at once; and as for the rest, no remarks about the Limberthornes of the past, or their representatives of to-day, must fail of an appreciative listener, as the squire let them fall. But all this was easy work to a faithful soul like Job, and the feeling of security grew with every day.

"He's peppery, though; he's peppery," Job reminded himself now and then, by way of caution; but at last, as he felt his first month's wages bulging

out his pocket, lanterns and moons were forgotten, and it seemed to Job that a whole sun was actually going to arise for him at last. He saw singing-birds and flower-gardens ahead for Meg; but they were trifles now compared with what might possibly be—with what he was going to try for, at least as soon as the squire's money piled up a little more. "If Meg could come to see; if Meg could come to see, after all !

"And there's that young Hollowbloom. I'm ready for him at last. *Now* I'll find out; now I'll see what he's got to tell me about the ways they have; not that I deserve ever to have any good come of it, I that have sat here as blind as poor Meg herself all these years."

Job's eyes twinkled round the corners of the Limberthorne house at all hours of the next day, and the calls that brought him to the front yard seemed as numberless as they were incomprehensible to any other mind. But he was determined to catch Guy, that was positive, when he came, or when he went, or at some lucky moment somewhere, before the day was out; and patience had its reward at last. He heard a sound on the gravel that he knew by heart, and hurried round to the front just in time to hear the piazza-door of Mr. Nat's room close. It would hardly be more than an hour, not more than two at the most, before he would come out; and Job redoubled his watch. There was a bit of lawn

stretching the length of the piazza from the front steps, and there were fallen leaves drifting in there in a way the squire did not like to see; and when at last Guy opened the door again and stepped out, there was Job raking away, his rosy face looking up like an apple dropped in the grass.

"So you're there again, Job. It's a long week since I've known what you were about. How's everything going on at home?"

Job's cap was off, and the twinkle would have put a farthing candle out of sight.

"That's just the very thing I wanted to speak to you about, if you could kindly give me a moment's time. Some things are going on wonderful well, sir, thanks to you; and some others not as well as they should at the same time, thanks to me. I've been such a stupid dolt, sir, such an unreasonable old thing, I never let it enter my mind that such a thing as you spoke of might be done for Meg. No one ever told me, and I never asked. I thought 'twas only such light as the Lord pleased to keep in her heart she could ever have, until you gave me the hint the other day. And now I can't forget it, you see; I can't forget it. Only I've had to wait till I could see my way to what it would cost to try; and now that I think that time's coming, I don't know more than a babe about it, you see. I couldn't make the slightest guess what means or what ways to take."

Guy looked a little startled. "You surely don't

think *I* undertake to know anything about it, Job!"

The twinkle went out of Job's eyes, and midnight seemed to be settling over all his face. "*You don't? You don't?*" he stammered in a bewildered tone.

"Why, no. I'm sorry, Job; but of course I haven't any way to judge. How can I undertake to say whether anything could be done or not? I was only asking you, when I spoke of it. I wouldn't dare."

Job's face showed a sudden gleam again. "Oh, no, no, no, sir!" he cried; "I wasn't asking that. 'Twas a very different thing. 'Twas never that I'd look for you to say whether one thing or another could be, but only to let me have some little guide to them that can. I know there are wonderful wise ones where you're from, and you've been among 'em all, no doubt, while I'm as innocent as a babe, sir! I'm as innocent as a babe!"

"Oh, is *that* what you mean?" asked Guy, greatly relieved. "You want me to tell you whom to consult?"

"That's it, that's it, for all the world: only after I know that, I should never know where to go to find them, or any of their ways, or—;" and Job's courage went down again. It began to seem too much to ask, after all, when he really heard the sound of his own words.

But Guy's laugh brought him up with a quick lift. "You've got a wholesome dread of 'ways' in that great city, haven't you, Job? It's a pity to spoil it;

but the wise men that do things down there are men, after all; and the streets have names and the houses numbers. I rather think I could give you directions that would do. And I will do so with all my heart, or anything else in my power, whenever you'll let me know."

Midnight had vanished away, and Job was all in a glow again; only there was a faint quaver of doubt underneath all his hopes, that kept one little corner of his heart down. But Job wouldn't cherish the doubt; he was fighting it off in great haste.

"It's only that he don't like to encourage me on too fast; that's all it is, I'm sure." And he poured out his thanks.

But after all he waited a moment. He couldn't see that Guy had really told him anything yet.

"Anything more, Job?" Guy asked, as he saw Job was hesitating. "Oh, do you want me to tell you *now*? I thought you were talking of by-and-by."

Job rubbed his hair and pushed the heap of dead leaves with his foot. "I'm afraid I was; I suppose I'll really have to say I was talking of a little time ahead, but it might seem to bring it a little nearer, only a trifle nearer, if I could have just the particulars settled in my mind. It would be more comfortable to think about when I'm awake with the thought of it at night."

"Poor fellow!" thought Guy; "has he been making so much of those few hasty words of mine? I do

hope they haven't been making mischief for him. What do I know about such things? And what a heart he's got behind that round little face!"

"Oh, yes, I'll tell you, I'll tell you," he said hurriedly, as he saw Job began to go down again. "I'll tell you, of course. I was only stopping to think. There are two or three doctors who are famous about such things; I can tell you who they are. And there's the eye-infirmity, and the hospitals. The doctors—;" Guy stopped again. He didn't like to tell Job that they charged half their weight in gold for a piece of work, unless it could be arranged as a charity beforehand. But there was a bewildered look gathering on Job's face; and the squire was coming in sight, besides.

"This will be the best way," he said. "Let me come down to your house to-night;—no, that won't do, for *she* mustn't hear. I'll meet you when you leave work, and we'll walk along."

The squire met Guy near the gate again; Guy seemed to be always stumbling on him there. He nodded pleasantly, for he was like common Boling-brokers in one thing, if no more: their most amiable side seemed to come uppermost when they came across "the new Hollowbloom."

"How are you?" he said, and then made a little gesture towards Job, where he was making his rake fly to atone for lost time.

"That's a very good man," he remarked; "suits

me very well. In fact, I never have any difficulty. I flatter myself my instincts always point out a good man; and of course there's no trouble about inducements when he's once found. The Limberthorne place, you know!" and the squire gave a majestic wave of his hand. "However," he added, half-apologetically, "I only speak of him because I think I mentioned to you the other day that I thought of looking him up."

Guy went towards home with a merry look in his eye.

"There's a little fun in Bolingbroke, after all," he said; but what was he to say to Job?

It was the same trouble as in the question about Drake. "It seems very queer work to meddle where there are so many people who know a hundred times better how things ought to be done, and have known Job, too, all their lives. I can tell him where people and places are, if he wants to know; but I can't go any further than that."

But somehow all this did not seem to settle matters satisfactorily. What would his father have done if Job had begged him for help? Would he call it being "ready" if Guy didn't at least try to see that he got what he wanted from some quarter, if not from himself?

"Then I must tell Aunt Cly," he said. "That'll be the only way. And I can't keep him waiting, either. I must have *something* ready to say."

Miss Hollowbloom was at home—Guy hadn't much fear about that; but, for a wonder, Tom was there too, sitting in the library with the door ajar, and Guy couldn't help wishing Shanter had him off for a few moments more. He didn't care about extra auditors; but he plunged in.

"Aunt Cly," he said as he sat down, "do you know Job Hardluck? He lives in that house built before the flood, up yonder."

Yes, Miss Cly knew him. He had lived in Bolingbroke a good deal longer than she.

"Hardluck?" asked Tom, throwing away his book and walking in. "Job Hardluck! Both his names fit him like a glove. What's he got especially upside-down with him now?"

"'Especially upside-down,' when he's working on the Limberthorne place?" asked Guy, laughing. "Heresy, Uncle Tom! No, nothing new, poor fellow, only a new way of taking hold of it, that's all. He's fretting about Meg, his daughter Meg, whether anything can be done for her eyes."

"Who put that notion into his head?" asked Tom, with a quick look at Guy. "She's twenty now, and she hasn't seen for a dozen years and more."

Guy felt himself flush. Why couldn't Uncle Tom have kept off till he'd had his talk with Aunt Cly?

"I suppose *I* did," he answered quietly, giving Tom back his look. "He was telling me about her a month ago, and I asked if something couldn't be

done—if he had tried everything; and it seems the idea's been pulling at him night and day ever since, till now he's come to me about it again, and wants to know what to do. I'd give anything to help him out—one of my own eyes, perhaps, if it would do any good; but I can't give him advice, you know. Of course I can't." And then another voice startled Guy. How should he have imagined Tom had left Roger behind in there?

"I should say, excellent advice was to leave things just as they are. I hear the girl singing like a lark when I go by; she can't be breaking her heart."

"Do you think no one ever sings when the heart is breaking?" asked Miss Cly, with a look quietly sent through the half-open door.

"Not when it sounds like that. Anyhow, if he puts ideas into her head, and then nothing comes, don't you see how things would be? He'd better be quieted down."

"Come, Rode," put in Tom, "you don't need to be told it must be poky work going about in the dark for ever. I'd be glad to see something done for the girl, if there's anything to do;—but perhaps 'twould be better to let it wait a while."

"And what might be your idea of a while?" asked Miss Cly, with another slow shaft out of her eyes. "Didn't you say something about a dozen years?"

"Well, those are past and gone," said Tom good-naturedly; "but as to this new notion, that's another

thing. If Job's set his heart on trying though, let him try some time."

"But he doesn't know how to try; there's the rub," said Guy.

"Tom," said Miss Cly, "is there any oculist in the city standing higher than that Dr. Lesseps who's a friend of yours?"

"He's at the top," said Tom. "Now, some day when I go in, I'll tell him about the girl, and see what he says. The trouble is, those men are so used to five-hundred-dollar fees for one look at an eye."

"That need not be a difficulty," said Miss Cly.

"No, of course. Let Job go ahead when he gets ready, and he can come to me for my share of the bill. I'd be glad enough to see the old fellow happy; it's a hard case.—Come, Rode, let's be off. That client of yours isn't coming, that's plain."

"Aunt Cly," said Guy, when they were gone, "Job will never let any one give him charity for Meg, at least not as long as he believes his hands can work things out; only he doesn't know much about it, that's true. He's 'innocent as a babe,' as he says, about 'ways' and means; but he can't think of anything else, and he can't rest till some one helps him to a start."

Miss Cly looked troubled. "You see, Guy, it would be a very simple matter to take the girl to an authority, and have a decision at once as to whether there is any hope; and the only strange thing is that

we've all looked on all these years, and no one has ever asked the question before. But, as Roger says, it would be a cruel thing to disturb the quiet the child seems living in, if it were only to put disappointment and restlessness in its place."

Guy remembered Meg as he had seen her that morning in the door. He couldn't imagine restlessness in the soul that was looking out through that face. But disappointment! Yes, that is bitter to all.

"Aunt Cly, I've got to say something to Job. I can't make him wait. How would this do? I might get him to tell me all that he knows about Meg's eyes, all that happened to them, and all that the doctors have ever said about it, and then write to Dr. Holt and ask whether he thinks there's any use."

Miss Cly fixed a slow, silent look on the boy's face. Tom's hair, her own Guy's eyes, his mother's mouth. Yes; but where did he get all this that lay behind? She laid her hand suddenly on his with a quick pressure that almost startled him.

"Yes, go," she said; and then added as hastily, "Guy, you are—I could not do without you any more."

When Guy came back he sprang upstairs to his own room with a light step. Job was satisfied, and a hundred times more. Everything was going right now that "the young Hollowbloom" had taken hold! Job would answer for that. There wasn't even a

twinge of uncertainty left. Of course he didn't know anything about such things himself; what should he know? But now that it was going into the hands of them that did—O Meg, Meg! Was the good Lord forgiving him that he had sat by "like a stock or a stone," all these years, without even a question coming into his mind?

"Well, even if nothing more comes of it, it's worth a year's life to have made a face look as Job's does to-night," Guy thought. "I'll write his letter for him before another quarter of an hour's gone. Wouldn't papa have revelled in doing it! Oh, if I could just sit down at papa's own old desk to get it off. If I could only look at it, or at anything else that was his, now and then. But everything's packed away, everything that I ever thought of bringing here, in the cabinet that Roger called 'too much furniture.' Well, papa would rather see me take it like a man, than get my comfort out of the things in any wrong way. I couldn't let it make trouble for Aunt Cly."

He opened the door, but at the first step inside he stood fastened to the floor. What was that standing close under the antlers and filling up that vacant space? and what was that on the other side, in the niche just beyond the brass-handled chest of drawers? Was he dreaming? The cabinet and the desk! He sprang first toward one, and then toward the other. How every leaf and flower, every hobgoblin and

tracery of queer carving in the black old wood looked at him like a friend that could have spoken words! How the very outline of the desk, the worn places on the lid, everything seemed to bring back the very presence that had seemed so utterly lost.

"Aunt Cly, Aunt Cly has done this. Where is she?" and Guy bounded down over the stairs.

She was not far off. Guy knew pretty well where to look; but what to say, how to thank her, that was another thing.

But Miss Hollowbloom spared him perplexity of that kind. She glanced up with ill-concealed eagerness. Was Guy pleased? She shot one look in his face, and then even her powers of concealment failed of quite doing their work.

"She's as happy as I was when I came back from Job," thought Guy. But she covered her excitement again in an instant, and stopped him with a quick little gesture.

"Don't thank me, Guy. It was only your right, and a right you had been kept out of quite too long."

"But I must thank you, dear, dear Aunt Cly. How kind, how kind you are! And how did you ever manage it at all?"

There was an instant's silence. It was so many years now that no one had said, "Dear, dear Aunt Cly," except when once that little faded note came

in. But when she did speak, it was as quietly as if he had asked where Tom and Roger were.

"I wrote to Dr. Holt, Guy, and asked him if there was anything besides the cabinet he thought you would like to have. He spoke of the desk. But you were right in thinking it was best to wait a little while. It is quite time now though, and they came just as you left the house. I hope they will make you happy. They are beautiful, both of them, aside from any other value of their own. And it is not necessary for you to speak of them to any one unless you choose."

"I can never leave Aunt Cly after this, whatever comes," he thought as he went back over the stairs. "She is doing too much for me; and sometimes I think she has been as hungry in her heart as poor Drake, and is setting it all on me at last. It's mighty strange, but it looks a good deal like it to me."

It was a happy letter-writing when Guy got about it at last. Not the first sitting, by any means, at letters to Dr. Holt; and even the others, when his room had been comparatively cold and strange, had warmed it up and made him forget what a long stretch fifty miles could be. And now, with everything as it was to-night!

CHAPTER XIX.

DISMISSED.

THE Centennial that had been such an excitement with the Bolingbrokers for the past few months was rapidly drawing near; it was Saturday now, and Tuesday, close at hand, was the important day. It was a lucky thing the date didn't run a week or two further into autumn, for one or two winds had already whistled that would have given out-door celebration rather a chilly nip. And part of the doings must be out of doors, of course; cannon-firing, for example, and processions, even if the squire's new mammoth barn, that every carpenter in the neighbourhood was busy upon, should get roofed in time for the dinner, and the speeches that were coming after that.

"Pooh! pooh! the weather'll be all right," said Uncle Hookey from his throne. "Some people talk about Indian summer when it isn't here, but my Indian summer comes the second November week. And as for the barn, tut, tut! that'll be roofed in."

"Yes, I expect we might reckon on the squire for roofing in the town, if there was any call; if he

couldn't make things go right without," answered Joe Scantling in his slow tones.

"Oh, we'll have everything right; he's a Limberthorne, you know," said another voice; and a savoury recollection of Uncle Hookey's plain remarks, a few weeks ago, was raising another laugh round the circle, when the door opened and "the young Hollowbloom" stepped in. A half-dozen friendly words greeted him; for one by one Guy had come across most of the company, and knew their names, at least better than they seemed to know his.

"Yes, yes," said the old postmaster, bustling round to the Hollowbloom box; "I can give you a letter this time, Mr. Powers;" and Guy recognized it at a glance. It was Job's letter. The doctor had been prompt.

"Thank you, thank you! And how's that Centennial coming along? I suppose the programme is having the finishing touches put on here;" and he returned the salutations of Uncle Hookey's court with a pleasant smile.

"Seems to warm things up somehow when that young man looks in," said the postmaster with an appealing look to the company as Guy closed the door; but Guy had forgotten them already in his haste to get at what the doctor said.

He was afraid to tear it open, too. If it said, "No use," how should he ever tell Job? and if the doctor could give no better judgment than any one else

until he saw, why, there would be the chance still the same of dropping Meg back out of excitement and hope that had better not have been raised.

But he pulled out the sheet and unfolded it, whatever it might be, and one quick glance, catching a word here and there, was enough to break the suspense. "Try," was the word. He could see that, and he went back to the beginning again.

"MY DEAR GUY,—I'll give you credit for remarkable perspicuity in stating your case; but still you must remember that my own eyes, though good, feel fifty miles as a difficulty in making conclusions on it. Notwithstanding that, however, I should think it by all means best to bring the patient down; it isn't the kind of question that ought to go unanswered. I'll speak to Lesseps about the case, and he'll bring the charges down to Bolingbroke range. That'll be all right, for I shall do the same for him some day. If he says anything's to be done, after he sees the patient, the hospital is the place. Let me know, and I'll fix it.

"When are you coming to see us? We must have a visit before a great while.—Very truly yours,

"H."

Guy hurried home and handed the letter to Miss Cly, with pride and pleasure jumbled together in his haste. He was proud of the doctor, whether Miss

Cly liked him or not; and it all looked so well for Job.

"Good, so far, isn't it?" he said. "Now I must tell Job. What a look he'll get on. He twinkles when there's nothing uncommon up; but it's a mighty deep shine when he gets going on about Meg. He isn't quite ready for a start though yet. He's got an idea of his own about how much money is a pile, and he reckons on a month or two more with the squire before he can feel it in his pocket and say it's there. He'll never let any one help about that; if they do, it'll have to be in a way he never'll guess."

Miss Hollowbloom looked after him as he passed down the yard. Yes, he would have the other Guy's firm step, and manly, well-proportioned figure; not heavy, like Roger's; more like Tom's, but handsomer than Tom's. There never had been one in the family equal to the first Guy, but it seemed as if she saw him again before her now.

But that wasn't the only thought pressing on Miss Cly, as her eyes followed him under the chestnuts and out over the road as far as they could reach.

Why was this boy, this stranger here, doing a thing that had been lying undone all these years because no one of all the old lookers-on had given it a thought or a touch? Possibly no one would be able to lift the shadow from Job's house—that remained to be proved; but it certainly had lain there until now with not a hand stretched out to try. Had he

more heart than other people, or was it that watch-word of his that he had let slip the other night—"Ready and willing"? She could trace fifty things that had made him dear to her back to that now.

And who did he say had taught it to him? The man she had detested all these years.

Guy had not gone far when he heard a footstep behind him. Drake was hurrying with a half-run to overtake him, and then slowed down into what was a drag for him, to keep along by his side.

"If I only had a goat-skin umbrella," laughed Guy to himself, "I might imagine I had a man Friday too. I've seen pictures of him that wouldn't be bad for Drake, with that eager, grateful look, and that long black hair. I wish I had half as much soul in proportion to my brains, though. Poor old Drake! he thinks a heap too much of me."

"Drake," he said suddenly, "it's getting too cold for church out of doors. I think you'd better come in."

A look of dismay and trouble overspread Drake's face, and he exclaimed, "No more church with you?"

"Oh yes, I'll find a place to read to you somewhere, but I want you to come in."

"But I can't, you know. You know what they said."

"Well, suppose you make a change about that when Sunday comes. We all have clothes that we don't wear to church. Perhaps you wouldn't care about all you'd hear; but there's the organ, you know,

and the songs, if you didn't understand all the rest. It's going to be too cold to stand listening outside. I couldn't keep warm if I thought of it."

Drake's face lighted as Guy went on, but it settled down into trouble again, and he shook his head. "I can't; I'm too queer, you know. They said I was too queer."

"Now, Drake, tell me, who ever said that? Some foolish fellow with not half as much wit as you."

But Drake only shook his head again.

"Well, I must find out. I can see that it isn't said again, but I want you to come. You wouldn't refuse me a thing I asked you, would you, Drake?"

The troubled look changed to one of distress. "Don't! don't! don't!" he cried. "Ask me anything I can do. I'll die for you, if you want me to. I'd like to die if 'twould do you any good. But they won't let me come in. They won't let me, I say." And Guy saw the white look and nervous trembling of one of Drake's "evil days" coming on.

"Never mind," he said hastily; "you shall do something else for me. We'll say nothing more about it now. Some time, when I want something, I'll let you know. We'll have our walk to-morrow, anyhow."

"It's a queer notion the fellow's got," he said to himself, as Drake turned off with his mail. "Some one must have given him an uncommonly ugly hit, to go so deep and hold on like this. I don't know

what to do with him. I could get some one to speak to Mr. Lake about it, if Drake would only take it differently himself; but if he can't, it won't do to worry him. I only wish some one could do better for him than I. Well, I can put Job into just the right hands at last—that's one good thing;" and he went on.

Job was busy in the Limberthorne corn-lot. Limberthorne corn-stalks were supposed to be sweeter and juicier than corn-stalks grown on any other land; and Limberthorne Jerseys and Alderneys were believed to make better returns for munching them. So Job was gathering in the stacks, and the rustling and rattling made such a noise that he heard no other sound till Guy stood fairly before him.

Then he gave a great start; for he knew Guy wouldn't be hunting him up in the midst of work unless there was something to say about Meg.

"I've got it, Job," said Guy; and for an instant Job half turned his head away, and the rosy colour disappeared out of his cheeks.

This letter would settle everything; Job was sure of that, and had counted the hours before it could come, over and over a hundred times.

But now, what if it should say No!

"Look round here," said Guy; "don't be frightened, man. We're all right; at least as far as any one can say so now." And Job plucked up heart and turned for the news with an excited little laugh.

It was nearly dark, these cloudy November nights, before Job called his work done and turned his steps toward home. Meg had the lamp lighted ready for him this evening, and shadows were lying on the curtain again; the fire was glowing, and the tea-kettle singing in its place, while Meg sat by the table with a bit of braiding in her hands: for there was more than one kind of dainty work that came from her fingers as perfectly done as if the clearest eyes had shone upon it; and between one thing and another, there were few idle moments when Job was away.

But to-night Job was late. Meg knew it was late, as well as if the clock could have told her, and she kept her pretty ear turned toward the corner around which he would come hurrying.

And Job knew she would be listening, too, and that was the reason why he was stopping and standing still just beyond it, as he had done that evening a few weeks ago.

But what was the trouble of that evening compared with this? Nothing, absolutely nothing, Job said to himself, as he stood there shivering in the November wind. He didn't know he was shivering; he didn't know that it wasn't July. There was only one thing that stood clearly before his mind.

"Dismissed!" he groaned. "Not wanted on the Limberthorne place any more. And what will become of the letter, the doctor's letter, now?"

The eclipse was more than eclipse this time; it was deep Egyptian darkness, and Job found his hand groping out before him for once, with a gesture like Meg's.

Then he stood still again, with a stunned, dazed feeling at his heart. "Dismissed!" he groaned once more. "Oh, I knew he was peppery—I knew he started up hot now and then; and what's born to any one is born to him, I suppose. It's a hard thing to control, they say; and I know I was an old dolt to forget his particular orders a second time, for thinking, as I've been doing every moment, one thing or another about Meg. An old dolt, I say; but I never thought he'd burst out in such a blaze, and give me the sack in a minute and for ever, like that. O Meg, Meg, Meg!"

Job's corner was a little out of the way, and there happened to be no one passing by. That was fortunate, for he had not stirred when another five minutes were gone. He couldn't go home yet—never, with such a leaden, staggering step as that.

"It's no use about the letter now," he said, shaking his head, "no use in this world. And how am I ever going to tell the young Hollowbloom that? One month from to-day, I was reckoning I could say I would start; I had it all counted out—all counted out. But it's no use now. Who's ever going to give me work after hearing this? And who'll have any work to give if they would, with this time of the

year setting in? There'll be a running behind this time as'll never catch up—never. And Meg waiting, and never even knowing what I was so near getting ready to do—what I was so very near getting ready to do—if this great trouble hadn't come."

But this would never do. If he let the time go on like this, Meg would be asking why he was so late, and what should he ever do then? He roused himself; he must go round that corner as if he were the gayest old fellow in the world.

But it was of no use. He retraced a step or two and tried again. No better this time. What would Meg say to a step like that?

What would she say? She mustn't have anything to say, anything to ask about at all! He went back a rod or two, gave himself a monstrous shake, and started for the corner on a full run.

All right this time. He rounded it, and was up the steps with a spring that made Meg laugh outright.

"To think of your coming out so frolicsome with one year after another going over your head as they do!" she said.

Job tried to laugh too, but his throat seemed like an iron wall, and he only made a strange little sound.

"Why, now, I believe you've been getting a cold," said Meg. "Don't you remember I wanted you to take your thick coat to-day?"

"Oh no, no, no," answered Job, hurrying out the words. "Why, Meg, I've been all in a glow this

afternoon. You can't have an idea of the glow I've really been in."

"Wasn't that an excellent answer, now?" he went on to himself. "If I can only keep it up like that." And Meg was laughing again and getting the supper on; and so long as Job could keep up a clatter with his knife and fork, that went to help things along. If his appetite seemed to be keen, Meg would never think of anything wrong just then.

But when it was over, and Meg was getting things put away, and singing like a bird all the time, Job had time to think again.

And so this was one more of the changes he had laughed over with Meg, till she had come to think it the most delightful thing in the world that life was a checkerboard instead of standing in one dull square. But there had never been one to compare with this—never anything to compare! He would have to tell her of it, too, before long—but not to-night. He couldn't do it to-night with this leaden lump in his throat that seemed to choke him whenever he tried to speak.

CHAPTER XX.

THE CENTENNIAL.

A HUNDRED years may seem a long time to wait for a day, but the day comes after all, notwithstanding that; and though the last few weeks had seemed to some of the impatient Bolingbrokers to make a respectable century in themselves, they had disappeared at last, and in the second week of November, the absolute, actual Tuesday for which they had been waiting so long rose clear and bright on their expectant eyes.

And if Uncle Hookey had reigned as authority and oracle before, he was proved a genuine prophet now.

"Didn't he say his Indian summer came the second week? and look at it now," ejaculated Joe Scantling, rubbing his hands in glee, as he pointed to the dim outline of the mountain spur, wrapped in soft haze, and lying, as did every other object in the landscape, softened and shaded in the dreamy atmosphere of the day. The wooded stretches still were russet and gold, though the scarlet tints had dropped and faded

away; and the pale blue of the misty sky lay kindly and warmly over all. There was no hard outline anywhere, no menace of sharper days at hand. Summer might be setting up her reign for the century to come, so far as any suspicion of chill confessed the contrary.

The Bolingbrokers were jubilant, and had more than half a feeling that the whole thing might be taken as a compliment to themselves. Why shouldn't Indian summer come on this special Centennial day?

The last shingle of the barn roof had been nailed to its place while the sun was still an hour high the day before; and as to all other preparations, the squire had the latest item concluded before he slept. The cannon that had been commanded by a Bolingbroker in the war of 1812 was mounted and prepared; and the speakers for the day were in town, and put away for a night's sleep in the Limberthorne best beds. There was a real walking and breathing congressman, whose speeches were read all over the country; and beside him, a veritable ex-governor, who had seen all the countries of the world, and half the great men in them too. And both these heroes had been Bolingbroke boys in their day; Bolingbroke had given them all the stuff they were made of; no one could deny that.

The cannons were pounding away with the very first streak of red in the sky; one hundred salutes were fired before breakfast, and plenty more at

appropriate times later in the day. The procession started off with flying colours, one of them being tattered and torn with the perils of victories won, but all the more glorious for that, of course; and an old-fashioned militia training filled up the middle of the day.

"There's one sensible soul in this town," Roger muttered at the breakfast-table. "You won't see Nat Limberthorne out of his den to-day, I'll warrant. I've a great mind to go and take refuge with him till this hubbub's at an end. A bore and a nuisance the whole thing."

"Oh, fy, man, where's your public spirit?" laughed Tom. "Who can help feeling a stir in his breast to-day? And besides, you'll have to show yourself to keep peace with those clients of yours. Come along and have a good time. It's early yet, it's true—no hurry; but you'll want some of that dinner, of course."

"Dinner!" answered Roger with disgust.

"Well, the speeches afterward, then. Guy and I will have to see what the day is made of, anyhow.—And don't you want to see the muster, Cly? Holly'll take you up. I've promised to shoulder a flagstaff or something of the kind for them, when the procession moves off. I shall earn my dinner, you see, and can eat Roger's for him, too, no doubt, by the time it comes.—But come in for the speeches, Rode, if no more. You'll find Guy and me somewhere in the fray."

The programme went brilliantly on, the only disturbance to the squire's flush of success being the fifteen minutes' delay to the setting off of the procession. Every one was in his place and the whole line ready to move, except that there was a murmured call running along for Tom.

Tom had an important part to sustain, and where was he? Some one else could take his place, of course, but no one else would be a Hollowbloom, and at least one Hollowbloom they were determined to have. They had spent useless persuasives on Roger, to get him into the after-dinner ranks, and now here were rank and file together, the whole impatient line, stamping the ground for Tom. He had said "Yes" in a moment to what they asked, but that didn't answer the question of where was he now?

But two or three messengers despatched in succession brought him whirling up with Shanter at last, and the line set in motion. The squire quieted his excitement, everything went on swimmingly again, and the hour arrived when the mammoth barn invited the mammoth appetites of the Bolingbrokers to its feast.

Guy had been in and out among the crowd at odd times through the day, Miss Cly having with a laugh declined his offer to carry out Tom's suggestion that she should join the lookers-on.

"Holly'll stand like a soldier, Aunt Cly," he said. "Won't you go? Bolingbroke will never be a hun-

dred years old another day." But she only laughed again and told him to be off.

But whenever his eye ran over the crowd of faces, he missed one that he had thought would certainly be there; a round rosy face with twinkling eyes, out of which the light of a wonderful new hope was shining bright and clear. He saw Thad Harker, the red barn and grape-post man, whose pursed-up little mouth was drawn into an extra knot to-day; and Joe Scantling—he had found out his name and nodded to him across his barrel at the post-office many a day. Adam was there in full grandeur of old-time regimentals; and Drake was gliding in and out with a yellow chrysanthemum at his button-hole, and a cluster of red ones in his hat. But where was Job? He did not seem to come across Job anywhere.

"It can't be because of leaving Meg," he said. "He leaves her more than he stays with her, poor fellow; and as for work, the squire would think it next to keeping him at it on a Sunday, not to give holiday to-day."

It was the same thing when the hour and moment for the speech-making arrived at last. The floor was crowded, but Guy made his way to Tom, who was in his most radiantly companionable mood; and somehow, he could not tell just how or when, he found Roger had joined them and was seated quietly by their side. Uncle Hookey and his cane were close by, and in the remaining crowd of expectant faces

Guy recognized here and there a familiar one; but Job was missing still. What had become of Job?

But the ex-governor was beginning. To ears that had never heard an ex-governor, and to eyes that had never seen one, every word and every gesture had a strange and extraordinary fascination; and when the congressman followed, the charm was not broken. Both speakers not only soared off into such flights of eloquence as astonished their listeners, but interspersed said flights with droll stories of what Bolingbroke used to be and praises for what it was now; and they raised the Bolingbrokers to the highest pitch of good humour with themselves and all the world.

"That's it. That's the way to do things," exclaimed Joe Scantling in an ecstasy of glee. "Those men were barefooted Bolingbroke boys, both of 'em, once on a time, but they cleared out when they were youngsters, and fought for it; and now look at what they've made of themselves."

But the squire's own turn was coming at last, and he was chafing with impatience for a chance.

"And now," said the last of the famous men, "I have the pleasure of yielding to a speaker of whose public spirit and generosity Bolingbroke has most justly reason to be proud;" and with a graceful wave of his hand toward the squire he sat down.

"Pity he said that though," said Joe. "That'll be sparks to gunpowder to the squire."

But the squire had begun already, and his clear, well-toned voice commanded his listeners in spite of the fact that he was following for once as a lesser light.

"Straight as an arrow, and a fine figure of a man, if he didn't start out on his fortune without stockings or shoes," went on Joe. "But hark! There it comes. I knew we'd have it before long."

"Yes, friends and fellow-citizens," the squire was just beginning to say, "it is with pride and happiness that as I listen to the praises so worthily bestowed upon our beautiful town to-day, I remember that I have been the humble instrument of much that has marked her advance;" and with a proud and happy smile the squire drew a long breath preparatory to telling them more about it all.

But at that moment a croaking, muffled voice was heard somewhere among the seats: "Pooh, pooh! Tut, tut! Ridic'lous."

The squire reddened, and every one looked toward Uncle Hookey's bench. But there he sat, gazing respectfully at the speaker, his chin on the head of his cane, and he looking as innocent as a child; and the squire went on,—

"As I listen to the stroke of yonder clock-tower, and remember proudly that my own gift placed the—"

"Pooh, pooh! Tut, tut! Ridic'lous!" interrupted the voice again, though from quite a different side of the room.

The squire's eyes flashed, but he was not to be put down by impertinence, and rising on another flight, he was soon ready to "point with pride" again.— "And as I look upon your tasteful park, with its cool fountain and its shady seats, and remember that my own efforts—"

"Pooh, pooh, *pooh!*" snapped the voice again; and this time a crooked little green figure, climbing with awkward black feet along an uncovered beam, showed half the company what the other half had seen long ago. Uncle Hookey's tame parrot, that talked precisely as he did, of course, had wandered over the fence, and dropped in after dinner to hear the speeches with the rest.

A suppressed murmur ran along the seats, but there was a little too much real fun in the murmur, and the squire began to grow red again.

"Hush!" whispered Joe Scantling; and the audience drew down their faces. Poll cocked her ear toward the platform, and the squire went on once more.

"Talking about bygones, at last, thank fortune," muttered Uncle Hookey over his cane. "Maybe we'll have a little rest now on what he's done himself."

But hark!

"And so, fellow-citizens, in looking back over the record of our little town, I find no name more honoured than that of Limberthorne, my own family, my own ancestors—"

"Pooh, pooh! Time to dig potatoes?" croaked

Poll from the flagstaff over the speakers' stand, where her black feet had slowly carried her; and she dropped a downward blink at the spot where the squire stood. It was the one spark too many to the tinder smothering among his listeners; for at the very last meeting of the debating club the squire had reminded the company that a man who boasted of his ancestors was like a potato-vine—the best part of him under ground.

The murmur rose again, but a murmur was of no use any more to the pent-up feelings of the Bolingbrokers. It deepened into a shout, then broke into a louder one, and at last a deafening hubbub of hurrahs, laughter, and applause echoed through the room and stormed the flagstaff where Poll stood winking down upon her victim's head.

But fun viewed from one side is sometimes very different from the same thing looked at from another point of view, and the squire stood gazing speechless at the crowd, his eyes staring wide at the discovery of what had been an old story to the Bolingbrokers for so long, and the flush deepened to a crimson on his face.

"It's too bad! Take the creature down!" cried Uncle Hookey's voice, and there was a lull and a murmur that seemed to echo what he said; but every one looked at his neighbour, and no one stirred.

"Take her down, Uncle Tom," whispered Guy hurriedly.

"Wait," answered Tom, looking really distressed ;
"wait and see."

Wait ! what time was there for that ? And Guy turned entreatingly to Roger ; but Roger's face had settled into an immovable look.

Guy looked round the room ; every one seemed to be echoing Tom ; and Guy gave another look at the squire—the squire who had always had a kindly word for him, and whose money was so fast weighing Job's pocket down to the mark set for starting off with Meg.

He still stood transfixed, his eyes yet more widely dilated, and the look of pain and humiliation still burning in his face.

There was no time to ask why no one else was ready, and springing toward the stage, Guy stepped between the squire and the crowd below, seized the still blinking Poll, and dragged her screaming from her perch.

But when he turned to step down again, there was no speaker to be seen. He had vanished, though how or whither no one ever seemed exactly to know.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE HOLLOWBLOOM FARM.

THE Centennial day was over; the sun had set with a mingling of serenity and glow that seemed only a sympathetic reflection from the Bolingbrokers' minds.

"We've had satisfaction enough out of this to last us another hundred years, if any of us should happen to hold on for that length of time," said Joe Scantling to the group gathered in the post-office when evening came. "We've had about as glorious a time of it as a place of this size could very well hold."

There was a general response of agreement with Joe; but at the same time, as there are spots on the sun, there was one little twinge of uncomfortable feeling lurking underneath about the squire. No one had said so yet, but every one knew what was in the other's mind, and it was a relief when Uncle Hookey suddenly brought his cane down with a thump and exclaimed,—

"I'd have wrung the creature's neck for her, if twould have done any good."

There was silence a moment, and then Joe's voice was heard again.

"Yes, yes; but there's a *little* corner of the business that don't seem altogether to belong to Poll."

"Well, well," answered Uncle Hookey restlessly, "it's no use worrying about bygones. Maybe some good'll come out of it, after all;" and the group began to separate.

They had had day enough, even without the fireworks which rumour had promised them from the Limberthorne place, but instead of which silence and darkness alone hung over the old evergreens and elms.

As they passed the house under the willow, darkness was reigning there as well. There was no shadow on the curtain to-night.

"Job's put an early cap on his day," said Thad Harker out of his queer little mouth. "I don't remember seeing much of him either, now that I come to think."

And neither had any one else, when the question came up; his round face had appeared once or twice in the crowd as the day went on, but it had disappeared again as soon. He had gone only to be able to tell Meg he had been on the ground, and to answer if she asked how things went; he couldn't have stayed there for his life. For once and at last Job was hanging up no lantern against the eclipse; it was too much this time, and he was only stagger-

ing along in the dark. This wouldn't keep up many days; he would get the better of it yet; but till then he couldn't stay long at a time with Meg, and it would have been hard for any but himself to have told where his Centennial day was spent.

But Bolingbroke lights were not all extinguished, by any means, and the sitting-room window of the newly-painted parsonage was glimmering at its brightest and best. Mr. Lake had just come in from paying his respects to the great men at the Limberthorne place. The evening was a little dull for them, especially as the squire was indisposed and not leaving his room, and they had received Mr. Lake with a cordiality that had sent him back to the parsonage in the most buoyant mood.

"Very companionable men, my dear," he said, as Mrs. Lake, with a bit of lace and pink ribbon in her hair, made a pleasant little bustle about getting the fire stirred up when he came in. "It does a country minister good to get a breath from the outside world once in a while. We've had a very successful day of it certainly, take it altogether; and extraordinarily favourable, so far as weather is concerned. Indeed the weather is remarkable; it reminds me of our first autumn in Bolingbroke. Do you remember the day that Dave, the poor fellow that used to carry the mail, was killed? The very counterpart of this, and I don't remember many equal to it since."

Yes, Mrs. Lake remembered very well.

"And I remember the pale, shocked face you went about with for days, Henry, after they hurried you down to Dave's house to break the news before they carried him home."

"Well, well, it was a sorrowful house indeed. Dave was a rough-hewn stick, but all the better pillar to lean on for that. A kind fellow at heart too, and they were fond of him. That was one of the first troubles I saw here, but not the last, by many a count. It's a small parish, but they manage to creep in."

Mrs. Lake looked half regretfully into her husband's face as she saw a shade coming over the brightness he had brought home. Why had he begun talking to-night about poor Dave, whose woes were all ended ten years ago? She couldn't be sorry that he shared with his people when trouble came to them; what kind of a minister would he be if he did not? But she sometimes wished he did not carry it quite so far; there was hardly a day when he didn't feel somebody's affairs pressing upon him, and she hoped he had forgotten every one to-night.

"Well, Drake won't have any to break their hearts, if anything happens to him," she said, by way of diversion.

"Drake, poor fellow, that's true. Drake's been in high glee all to-day. He's had his good time as well as the rest. By the way, I feel troubled about that fellow sometimes. I feel as if I had a heathen in

my parish, and wasn't of the least use to him either."

"I don't see that he belongs to your parish especially," answered Mrs. Lake with a turn of her pretty head.

"Whose does he belong to, then, if a 'specially' must come in? No one's, I suppose; and that's the very point. I spoke to him once about coming to church, but I didn't make much out of him. I've been waiting ever since to find the right time to try again."

The troubled look was making its way into the minister's face again, and Mrs. Lake saw that her movement hadn't been a success.

"Tell me what the ex-governor had to say, Henry," she said.

The Bolingbrokers wouldn't have thought it altogether the handsome thing if the next morning had dawned in quite the perfection of the exceptional day; but it must be confessed that the Indian summer was still dreamy and soft, and no chill had crept back, so far, into the hazy air.

"Come, youngster," said Tom, as he and Guy rose from the breakfast-table, "suppose you and I have another scamper over the hills this morning. Shanter needs a run, and I'll show you the Hollowbloom farm."

"The Hollowbloom farm!" echoed Guy. What queer people these were! He had been in the house

a month before he found out that Roger was a lawyer and justice of the peace, and now was Tom going to turn out a farmer "on top of that"?

"You haven't seen the farm yet, have you?" laughed Tom. "We may see you settled down on it yet, with a big pair of mud-boots and a yoke of steers. We shall have to make something useful of you some day. It's time you were introduced."

"Do you think you'd like to be a farmer, Guy?" asked Miss Hollowbloom, with one of her slow looks in his face.

Guy felt himself flush, but he only laughed, and said, "How can I tell?" and begged to be told what the Hollowbloom farm might be.

"What may it be?" answered Tom. "I'll tell you what it *is*—it's one of the most valuable pieces of property in the whole family list. But Roger there won't touch it with even the end of his pen, and I can't be plagued any more; so it's leased for four years. If we put you on it as 'prentice a year or two before the lease is out, you'll be ready just in time. Don't you see?"

"Don't be a fool, Tom," said Roger from behind his newspaper. Guy couldn't see his face; but Tom only laughed, and said he would go and bring Shanter round. Guy had learned by this time what the chances were when Tom disappeared, and went for his books. He would have work to make up, to pay for this ride, if he got it; and he generally did get

the rides sooner or later when once the offer was made. But, for a great marvel, he wasn't fairly over his first page when Shanter came flying down the drive and Tom was calling at the side-door; and the next moment Miss Cly was looking after them as they spun out of sight, with the strange feeling it always gave her of late to see Guy go out of the house. Just what the feeling was she wasn't quite willing to define to herself; she was happier when the boy was in sight, that was all.

She would have to let him go some day, though, that was plain. He was going to make the scholar of the Hollowbloom family; she could see that; and Tom saw it too—that was what made him run on with his nonsense about mud-boots. Not that Guy wouldn't put them on in all haste if any one needed a service that couldn't be done without, but it would be brains rather than boots that would do most of his work in life. She only hoped Nat Limberthorne wouldn't get the boy over the ground too fast. He would go to college soon enough; she should be willing for once to take up Tom's refrain: "There's no hurry, of course." The old house would be desolate again, when that day came.

Guy meanwhile was flying over the road with the fresh morning air blowing in his face, and better still, with the reins in his own hands—the two things together driving off the momentary worry of what Tom had said about the farm. He was quite used

to driving Shanter now, thanks to Tom's good-natured way of being willing to share; but the pleasure grew, rather than lessened, as he felt the spirited, sensitive creature answering to the lightest pressure from his hand, or the slightest change in the tone with which he reached his ear.

They had passed the village almost before Miss Cly's thoughts had got as far as Nat Limberthorne, and now were whirling off on a road that turned sharp to the left of Job's cottage, and then on through a hollow where an old mill stood whirling away, with its stream pouring over a great red wheel, and then frothing down through a gorge deep enough for fifty legends and tales to lie at the bottom.

"The left," said Tom, as the road forked just there.

"Oh, *that's* it," said Guy, as they began a quick ascent. "That's why I've never seen the Hollowbloom farm. I've always taken the right, through that wooded bit, when I've walked out here, because—you can easily see why. This hill's so stony and steep, and has such a black, ugly look. I thought there couldn't be anything up here."

"There's a lesson for you, then, not to judge by appearances," said Tom. "Half the Hollowbloom income has come down this hill in days gone by. What it's going to do in the future isn't so clear, at least until you take hold of it;" and Tom laughed

again; and again the troublesome question, "What can he possibly mean?" gave Guy a momentary perplexity that did not make the fancy as pleasant as it seemed to Tom.

The hill once surmounted, stones and barrenness vanished away; and late as the season was, Guy could see at once that whatever Bolingbroke could show and do anywhere in the way of soil and productions, it was in the way of showing and doing here. From the blackberry-vines that clambered over the stone walls in heaps, bare now, except where a few scarlet leaves still kept their hold, to the stubble of the clean reaped, rolling fields, everything told of plenty, overrunning, and free; while here and there a grove, or a bit of woodland spared, showed what the stronger growth could be.

"There's a queer little lodge," said Guy, as they passed a tiny cottage, odd in its very smallness, and picturesque with clambering vines, a toppled-off chimney, and a general look of being deserted by friends and foes.

"That?" said Tom; "that's the old tenant-house of the farm. It hasn't been used for years. It got shaky, and the new man we employed had too large a family. So we put up another; you'll see it directly, as we get further on. This one stands just on the border of the farm. Now, however, as the farm is leased, neither of them is used. A great waste of real estate;" and Tom laughed.

"There's very little going on here just now, of course; but I'll show you the size of the barns, and I don't know but they've got the threshing-machine at work. In any case you shall see how the farm's divided, and where the different fields lie, and we'll take a turn through the timber lot; there's a good track running through. The finest twenty acres of timber in the county, and doubling in value every ten years. You shall see how the land lies this time, and when spring comes we'll show you a thing or two more. It'll be a fine stroke, now, if you find your destiny up here, and we have it all in the family once more;" and Tom laughed more heartily than before.

They made the round, and even Guy's untrained eye could see the perfect cultivation and faultless order that distinguished the place even over the finest that he had seen; and the drive under the great old trees was treat enough in itself. But, through all, the uneasy wondering at what these hints of Tom's could mean kept up a restless undercurrent, that made him rather an absent listener as Tom enlarged upon one object of interest or another on the way.

And after he was at home, and trying to get settled at his books again, the trouble was still there.

Was Tom really in earnest? Was that what they were really planning all this time?—to make a farmer of him, and let him work for the share of the family benefits he had? And why not? Wouldn't

that be right? Of course it would; he had never wanted to take gratuity from any of them, and he expected to work wherever he might be. But need it be here, and work that would never seem like anything but bondage to him? There were plenty of people to whom work such as he liked would seem bondage just as much. Why shouldn't they take the farming, and leave him free to live?

"Uncle Tom's in earnest, though," he decided at last; "I'm sure of it; and Aunt Cly asked how I'd like it, and didn't change a look. Uncle Roger made a drive at Uncle Tom, but that makes it all the more certain, for he's always on the opposite side."

But why should he stay in Bolingbroke and be a farmer? Why shouldn't he go back to the doctor, back where every association made home, and work there?

Lessons were attended to with difficulty for a while, but at last Guy started up and went for a fresh book with a run.

"How many times over am I going to let this question raise a riot and tumble everything right and left? It was settled once for all before I ever took a step towards Bolingbroke. I came here because it was right, and I'm to stay here for the same reason. And didn't I say, the other day, I could never leave Aunt Cly, whatever came up? I should be an ungrateful fellow to do it, if she wants me to stay, and I believe she does want it; I can't get away from

that. There's no going to college, of course, if Uncle Tom means what he says. Then the only thing is for me to go ahead as fast as I can with Mr. Limberthorne, and make the most of him while it lasts; see what comes next, and be sure it finds me ready and willing when it comes. It may not take the shape Uncle Tom is putting on it, after all; but if a thing once stands up fair and square as the *right* thing, it's to be done; and if it's done at all, it shall be with no fuss made about it—like a man, and a Christian, too."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE LAST ECLIPSE.

WHEN the hour arrived for "the den," as Tom called it, and Guy passed up under the Limberthorne fir again, a strange feeling of missing Job's round little face made him stop and ask himself how long it was since he had run across him anywhere.

"I didn't catch a shadow of him all day Tuesday, that's a fact," he said. "And now I think of it, I don't remember that I've seen him at all this week. He might be off somewhere, of course, but he's always bobbing into sight round one corner or another before the day is out."

He glanced up through the window now and then as the time passed, but still no one appeared; and at last, as he gathered up his books to go, he asked, half-involuntarily, what had become of Job.

"Job?" answered Nat absently, running his finger down a dictionary page; "I really don't know. Ah! I remember: I think he was discharged last week."

"*Discharged?*" echoed Guy, in such a tone that

Nat lost his place and looked up with a sort of amazement out of his piercing eyes.

"Is it anything to you?" he asked.

"To me?" answered Guy, recovering himself. "It's something to *him*. Discharged? Last week? And I've known nothing about it all this time."

Nat straightened himself and let the dictionary go. "I wasn't aware that my brother's choice of employes affected you," he said with a half laugh.

"But he can't afford it," went on Guy, still speaking hastily; "the fellow can't afford it. It'll bring him into a heap of trouble. He thought he was set up for life, with the squire to stand his friend."

"He'd better have looked out to keep right side up, then," said Nat, quietly opening his book again. "There—there's that word you were asking about; you'll see the root is the same."

But Guy wasn't thinking much about roots or stems as he hurried down the yard. He must see Job somehow; but Meg mustn't be within hearing, and how should he manage that?

But Job managed it for him, by appearing in sight as Guy came up. He could hardly have told where he had been himself, or where he went three times a day. Somewhere out of the house, that was all; for he could never have kept up the gay way he must have with Meg many hours at a time.

"Job," said Guy hurriedly, "what does it all mean? I couldn't think what had become of you. Is it true?"

Poor Job! he had been knocked down a great many times in his life, but nothing had ever been equal to keeping him down before. He had always got to his feet, with his lantern hoisted again, before any one else really knew he was hit; but this time!

It shouldn't last long though, and he wouldn't show it while it did last, if determination could keep it out of sight.

"It's all right, sir," he said, in the same tone he was so used to forcing for Meg. "I was a stupid dolt, that was all, and got what I deserved. I'll have to take a fresh start and keep my senses about me the next time. I'll have to keep my senses about me another time, that's all."

Job's speech sounded very well; but while Meg could only hear, Guy could see and hear at the same time. The twinkle was gone out of Job's little eyes, and there was a pinched and haggard look in the round face that told its tale.

"Now, Job, there isn't the least use in any such show as this. I know as well as you do how this thing has knocked you up. It's going to stop everything for a while, I'm afraid."

For one moment Job lifted a dull, hopeless look to Guy's eyes. If they had been cold or hard, he could have held out, but the pity was too much, and he broke into a sudden cry.

"O Meg, Meg, Meg! And I thought the good Lord was forgiving me for having sat like a stock or a

stone all this time! If he'd only taken *me* away from her years ago, instead of one that could have been of use!" and thrusting his hands out before his face, Job broke down as he never had in his life, and sobbed and cried without thought of who should see.

"The very best thing that could have happened to him; he's never faltered one moment in the house all this time, I know, and the pull's been too much for the fellow," thought Guy as he looked on. "He'd better have it out."

Job had it out, leaning against the old willow, and then looked up with a start at last, his face burning with shame.

"You see I'm not the one she ought to have, sir," he began, but Guy wouldn't give him time.

"That's the best thing you've done yet, Job. Now let's have the rest of it;" and they sat down on the door-step, and Job told the whole story through—the thinking too much about Meg, and forgetting the squire's orders, and the explosion that had made ruin, for the present at least, of all their plans.

"I knew he was peppery," he repeated again, "but I never thought he'd go off like that, and blow everything higher than a kite. But I was a stupid dolt, I say. It's a strange thing for an old man like me to be the only one left to Meg."

"Meg wouldn't change you for her pick of all the world; you know that. As for the rest, it's hard luck," went on Guy, never thinking he'd got hold of

Job's name. "But the squire isn't the only person in the world that an honest fellow like you can work for."

But Job shook his head. "It's the running behind, you see, sir—it's the running behind. I can't hope for anything now before spring, at the very best, not at the very best; and how am I going to catch up and talk of doctors' bills after that?"

"Not if you'd let some one give you a lift, Job?" asked Guy, stooping for a look under the rim of Job's hat.

"Oh no, no, no, sir! oh no, no, no!" exclaimed Job, starting to his feet; and Guy sprang up and said he'd speak to Adam,—there'd very likely be something about the place that would want help, and Job must keep up heart. And then Guy walked away, and Job got into the house with such a lively rattle at the door-knob that Meg laughed again.

"A wonderful cheerful chat you've been having out there, I should think, to bring you in with a scramble like that," she said as she passed her hand over his cheek. That was a way Meg had when her father came into the house.

"Why now, Meg, who do you guess it was? Who do you ever guess it could any way have been but that young Hollowbloom I've told you about sometimes? And he was talking of getting me to help them up there with Adam, in a pinch now and then —with Adam Gorringer, you know; and there isn't

a man in this world I can yoke up with as I can with him. Did you ever know such a fellow as I am for getting it better and better every time?"

"Now there's just one thing to be done," Guy was saying to himself as he walked along. "Somebody's got to see the squire and get him to take Job back. He's got over his flurry long ago, no doubt, and would be glad enough to make up, if he weren't too proud to say so. I don't know who it will ever be, though. Uncle Tom's the only one I can think of, and I could never get him up to it in a year."

He tried a little hint, however, when he told the story at home, but met with very much the success he expected.

"What! Job out again?" said Tom. "That's rough on the old fellow. I'm sorry for him, on my word. Hard luck for ever, that's a fact. But the squire'll come round again, if you only give him his time. I know him. Job has nothing to do but to wait, and he'll find everything right side up."

"But waiting goes too deep into the pocket for Job, you know, Uncle Tom."

"Well, 'twill pay him in the end. However, if I come across the squire when he's in the right mood, some day, I'll give him a hint. No hurry, though. The chance'll be all the better when he's had time to cool. And let Adam hunt up a few odd jobs, if he can, in the meantime."

"If waiting is all you want, there's a chance for

it," said Roger, with the Hollowbloom curl of his mustache. "The squire left suddenly Wednesday morning, on business out of town, with no precise time fixed for his return."

"Left town Wednesday morning!" echoed Tom, with a long low whistle under his breath. "O wicked, wicked Poll!"

"Guy," said Miss Hollowbloom, as the others left the room, "I think it is you who will have to manage for Job."

"I, Aunt Cly! The squire would discharge *me*, for the meddlesome fellow I'd be."

But the more he thought, the more the thing began to take that very shape before his eyes. He couldn't tell Job's woes to any one out of the Hollowbloom house; Uncle Tom was the only one in it he could possibly look to for help, and Guy knew altogether too well what his "some day" meant.

"I'll try it, then, if the squire ever gets back, and Job don't break down in the meantime. We must keep the poor old fellow up somehow."

Nabby was not in her very best mood when Adam came in for his supper that night; but Adam evidently had something on his mind that for once prevented his seeing it, or even looking before him to see how the land might lie.

"Mistress Abigail," he began, "you've always set up, from the first day we lived in this house together,

that your wisdom was better than mine, and I was wrong and you were right, whenever we couldn't agree. Now I won't disturb anything by saying whether I think that's always been so or not, but there's *one* little point between us as I'm ready to make up. If you wish to say, henceforward and heretocome, that young Mr. Guy has 'a way with him,' you may say it ten times a-day, and never hear a difference from me, so long as I'm capable of knowing what 'a way' may mean."

Nabby turned round with a very doubtful expression in her face. Adam had given only a half-compliment to her superiority, but a half-compliment from him meant a good deal, and he was hanging up his hat with a knock at the peg that seemed to say the confession was as full as it was free.

"So you've just found out what every one else in the house has had the comfort of knowing for weeks gone past. It's a good thing for you, Adam Gorringer, if your wits can wake up before the time's quite gone by for taking in what you're told. There's no one besides, from Mr. Roger up or down, as hasn't long ago made out there's some one at last in the Hollowbloom house that needn't be asked, nor waited for, when there's a way only placed before his eyes of making another pleased, or doing him some substantial good turn."

"I don't say whether I've just now found out, or when it was," answered Adam, looking Nabby un-

dauntedly in the eye. "It happens I'm ready to say it to you now, that's all; and might have been before, if I'd chosen to speak all I thought. There was I, out at those very grape-posts he went a three-mile walk and back to send down, and I ready to go out of my head with worry that I hadn't three hands instead of two to get wire, that has as many crooks as a cat has lives, straightened and run across, when out comes he to talk of some work I was to give away. I says never a word, but I felt a jump in my bones that told me my trouble was at an end. And it's half an hour from that moment to this, and here we're both snug in the house, and that piece of work, that would have worried me through half to-morrow, gone off light as a lark, and a pleasant kind of talk running along with it as would have made twice the time seem short."

Nabby didn't answer a single word. She was torn with the temptation to ask Adam if he didn't wish young Mr. Guy had been a girl; but she disappeared into her most private pantry instead, and brought back a supply of the pickle he especially and above all others preferred with his tea.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE OLD TENANT-HOUSE.

THE next morning Tom came down in his best spirits, and with a punctuality that indicated some extraordinary pressure brought to bear.

"Rode and I are off for the city, Cly, as soon as we get through ceremonies here; it happens we've both got a few things to look after, and we haven't been down there together for an age. It'll make a lively time for two old fellows like us."

He rattled on, and even Roger's face unbent out of its usual lines. He and Tom had been boys together, and Tom was always a boy still, but it was only at intervals, with a good stretch between them, that Roger felt the stiffening of years quite giving way, and linked himself with Tom again in the old style.

But this morning even Guy looked on a little amused; it was "the Hollowbloom boys," evidently, who were off for the day.

"And what are you going to do with yourself, youngster?" went on Tom. "Don't you want Shanter for a pull over the hills?"

Guy's eyes shone; he had never really had Shanter for his own.

"That's all right then; only you want somebody to go along. It's a plagued unnatural life you lead of it here, without a single fellow of your century to join hands. There isn't a mate for you in the whole of Bolingbroke. I've thought of it a hundred times. I don't see how you get along with it. Why didn't you have a brother—some grouty fellow—like Roger here—to bring along?"

"Oh, I shouldn't know what to do with him; I never had any one but—"

"But papa," he was going to say; but he checked himself hastily and began again.

"You're quite young enough for me, Uncle Tom; and if I could get Aunt Cly to say she'd go, I shouldn't envy you anything you can see to-day."

"You'll be a luckier dog than I ever was if she agrees," said Tom; but Guy caught her eyes, and they certainly did not say No.

"I must work for it, then," he said; for Nat Limberthorne had put him on his mettle that day with a hard fight and a long pull over some rough ground—it would be close work to get off that afternoon.

At that moment there was a knock at the side-door, and a summons for Roger to see some one in the library. He went, amid a great growling from Tom, and returned in a few moments with his eye-

brows pulled together and a bundle of papers in his hand.

"It's no use, Tom," he said; "you'll have to take yourself off alone. Here's a two hours' lot of work I'm engaged to do for a man; and he must needs turn up with it to be done at this very moment, and no other day in the year will do. I can't go, that's all."

Tom uttered a wrathful exclamation, and Roger went on,—

"Nothing but a stupid heap of copying either, that any fool could do; that's the provoking part of it. There isn't an ounce of brains wanted; but it's got to be done, for all that."

"If any fool can do it, then, can't you make it over to me?" laughed Guy, coming back from the aim he had been taking for the stairs and his books.

"To you? But you've got your own affairs. It's a two or three hours' stupid pull," answered Roger, hesitating and looking a little confused. He knew Guy wrote a clear, spirited hand, but he had never thought of taking a favour from the boy.

"Oh, affairs are nothing if you'll trust me. I should be very glad." And Guy, though he saw his drive vanishing out of sight, held out his hand for the papers with a frank readiness that brought Roger round. His face broke up into a friendlier look than had ever met Guy except on the evening when he had told him he "liked his grit."

"Come, then," he said, pushing open the library door and leading the way. "Indeed I should be very much obliged. Tom and I don't get off together every day, you know. Just let me spread this rubbish on the table, and I'll show you what the work is. There's just five minutes to spare."

"Sit here, if you like," he added, when he turned to go. "You'll find everything at your hand, and have room to spread;" and his firm, quick step followed after Tom.

"Uncle Roger doesn't know I have a desk of my own upstairs," thought Guy, as he listened to the step echoing through the hall. "I'm much obliged to him, but I think I'll make off and use my own quarters for his work."

He began gathering up the papers, but dropped them again, and drew up his uncle's chair with a quick pull.

"No, I'll stay here. He wouldn't want to touch them if he knew they had been on papa's desk, and no papers shall be written there to be looked at with such eyes. And papa wrote them the letter that they never answered, at that desk."

"It isn't possible Roger has said anything to disturb the boy," thought Miss Cly as she passed by and caught the tightened look of the mouth with which Guy was settling to his work. "I'm sometimes afraid we're not going to keep him happy here, after all."

"Miss Hollowbloom," said Nabby, putting her head

in at the dining-room door; and Miss Cly went, but with an uneasy feeling that stayed by through all the discussion Nabby had to propose, and the hour that followed before she would quite let her off.

But Guy's troublesome thoughts were much more quickly gone, and he was soon working away with a will, and only a half-earnest, half-amused look would have met Miss Cly if she had looked in again.

"I'm glad I could give Uncle Roger a lift," he said; "'twould have been too bad if he'd had to give up his trip. But if this is what it is to be a lawyer, I don't know but farming would do about as well. I should think a good field of turnips might interest a man quite as much as five thousand 'whereas's' all in a row."

But five thousand or less, he was a match for them, and the pile of copy was getting low at last. He looked up for a glance at Roger's clock. Half-past ten;—it would be eleven at least before he could get through. No chance of getting off *that* afternoon, he should have to tell Aunt Cly. As his eyes came back, something drew them to the window, and he caught sight of a familiar figure, with a flutter behind it, coming down the road.

"There's Drake. And no mail-bag, and no hour for one. What's bringing the fellow this way?"

He took up his task again, but his eyes wandered irresistibly to the window at every pause.

"What's he tiptoeing along under our fence for?"

There comes the top of his hat; he's trying to get a sight over the hedge. He can't be looking for me."

Guy went back to his work; he hadn't another minute to spare, and if Drake wanted any one, he would have to take the same course with the rest of the world—come up to the door and knock.

He worked down another page, but Drake was inside the grounds now; he could see him, without really lifting his eyes, creeping along from one tree to another, sometimes peering anxiously from side to side, as if searching for some object he wished to see, and then suddenly tossing an exultant gesture into the air.

"I can't stand this," said Guy at last, giving his pen a fling. "He must be looking for me, after all. But why don't the fellow say so?" and springing from his seat, he threw open a sash-door that led to the piazza, and stepped out.

Drake's quick eye caught his figure in an instant, and with a sudden gliding motion he shot from his retreat and sprang to the terrace, gesticulating vehemently, and then, as he reached Guy, quieting into a low triumphant laugh, while his face gleamed with earnestness and delight.

"So you are looking for me, Drake?" asked Guy; and Drake answered with a succession of excited nods.

"Yes, you! yes, you!" he said. "It's only you, of course."

"Why, what in the world's up with the fellow?

I've never seen him like this," he thought. "Something must please him extraordinarily."

But Drake was making him signs to hush. "Don't tell any of the rest yet," he said, "not till you ask. But you'll get it for me, I know."

"Get what?" asked Guy, growing more puzzled at every step.

Drake touched his forehead with a troubled look. "You know I can't think like the rest. You've found that out. But *this* time," and a gleam of elation brought the light back to his brilliant eyes.

"And what is it this time, Drake?"

Drake pressed closer to him with an eager face. "You said our church was too cold; you said 'twas growing cold; and you said you'd find a place to read to me somewhere. But you can't. I know you can't. I must be the one. That belongs to me."

Guy smiled involuntarily. "Do you think of building, Drake?" he asked.

Drake broke into one of his long, ringing laughs, and then suddenly turned an entreating face to Guy's.

"I want you to ask him for it. He'll say Yes to *you*. That's why I've come. If you'll get it, you can come there. I *can't* go to church, you know, I'm too much dressed; but I *must* hear about the Friend."

The Friend! Guy was quite used to that; that was always Drake's name for "the Master," as Guy more often called him in his own thoughts; but

something in the pleading look of Drake's great burning eyes struck suddenly to his heart. Oh, poor, strange, hungering soul! O *Wonderful One* indeed, to come to it and satisfy it with an infinite, perfect Friend! And what would Guy himself have done, these long, lonely months, if "Friend" as well as Master had not been one of his wonderful names?

"Yes, yes," he said hastily, "I'll tell you about him, Drake. But I don't understand. What do you want me to get?"

Drake made an impatient little gesture. "You know where it is. I saw you when you rode by it with him. He was showing it to you. Not the new one; the old one I mean."

Guy's eyes opened wide, as a dim comprehension of Drake's idea came in. "You don't mean—is it possible you mean the old tenant-house of Mr. Tom's?"

"Yes, yes, yes!" said Drake excitedly. "That's it. I want to live there. I never lived anywhere before. Ask him to give me the key. Get him to let me have it. I'll pay him all he asks. I've been saving up. I've got money, a great deal of money. He shall have all he wants."

And by degrees Guy succeeded in picking up the whole of Drake's plan out of the fragments the simple fellow let fall. If Tom would rent him the old tenant-house, he could turn householder, and set up for himself. Then he would have a home of his own for the first time in the twenty years he could re-

member ; and, more glorious still, a place where he could play host to Guy, and where the Sunday readings could go on, whether the thermometer rose or fell. He had saved his earnings. His bank-book showed what seemed to Drake a fortune to draw upon. He could put needed articles into the house ; he knew how to cook, to his own taste, at least ; everything would be sumptuous, rapturous, and wealth itself. Only, Guy must see the "Hollowbloom boys," and get leave. Guy must get him the rent and the key.

"Yes, I'll see to it, Drake," he said, not thinking it his affair to decide whether the scheme were a practicable one. "Uncle Tom's away to-day ; it's his business, I suppose ; but I'll ask him when he comes. He'll let you have the house, I'm sure, if he thinks it's good enough for you."

Drake seized Guy's hand and kissed it, turned away radiant, and waving his arms high above his head, disappeared in the same zigzag track by which he had come.

Guy stood and watched him out of sight, and then turned back to his interrupted work. "Poor old Drake," he said ; "he shall have what he wants, if it's the thing for him. But I must get through with this ;" and with a few minutes' spirited work it was done—not an error, not a blot, and the two packages of copy laid in order where Roger's eye could fall on them when he should come in.

The great candlestick was lighted when Tom and Roger came back. The same train brought them that had brought Roger and Guy, but the evenings had grown very short since that time. Roger went straight to the library, and remained there a few minutes; coming back with the papers in his hand, he stepped to the side-door where Adam was still holding Holly, and passed them over to him, with a few quiet directions as to delivering them at once.

Then he came back to the dining-room, and stopped on the threshold an instant as he looked about for Guy. How suddenly it reminded Guy of the first time he saw him, when he came down the doctor's stairs with Roger Hollowbloom's card in his hand. The strong, erect figure, the clear eye, the slightly-reddened, smooth-shaved face; but there was something different, after all. The look in the face was friendlier; Guy was sure of that.

"Oh, there you are!" he said. "That's a handsome piece of work you did in there. I looked it over. Indeed, I'm very much obliged. It's an ugly job to me, a lot of scribbling like that; and you've saved me a day that I wanted, besides."

"Did you have a good run with Shanter?" asked Tom, as supper went on.

"I didn't get off, Uncle Tom. I—" Guy hesitated. He wasn't sure it wouldn't be better to get Tom by himself when Drake's petition came on; but, after all, the farm seemed to be a family affair. If the

tenant-house was to be let, the discussion would have to come off sooner or later, and he might as well open fire.

"Didn't get off?" echoed Tom, looking surprised.

"No; I had a visitor, for one thing, who broke in on my time. Drake was here on a business errand of great importance to him."

"Drake! What possesses that fellow to hang around you as he does?"

"It's *you* he wants to hang around this time, I believe, Uncle Tom," answered Guy laughing. "Or at least he's asking for the key of a castle of yours. He wants to rent the old tenant-house on the farm, and move in."

Tom looked at Guy a moment, as if taking in the full magnitude of the proposal, and then, leaning back in his chair, broke into a merry burst of laughter.

"The old tenant-house! Drake keep bachelor's hall in the old tenant-house! That would be a prince in a castle indeed. Is the fellow losing the few wits he had left? Let him have it though, and welcome, if he wants it. He doesn't get too many luxuries in life; eh, Cly? Do you relinquish your right?"

For Drake? Did Drake want anything that belonged to her? Her thoughts flew back to a September afternoon when he handed her a letter under the trumpet-flower vine, and she glanced at Guy where he sat. She had always kept a kindly place

in her heart for the poor witless fellow; and if he had wanted a bit of the farm itself now, she would hardly have said No.

"Drake can do as he likes, as far as I am concerned," she said. "There would be no rent, of course, under the circumstances; but I should think the other house a more suitable place."

Tom didn't ask what "under the circumstances" meant. He was thinking of something else. "What! the new house? Why not offer him a part of this? That would be ridiculous. It was built for a family; and it stands a mile farther off, besides. Drake has more sense of the fitness of things. There's no key that I know of; but Drake's welcome to the rest of it, if I'm the landlord. Roger there hasn't spoken yet."

"I don't know what Drake's idea of fitness may be," answered Roger, quietly rising to leave, "but *you* know very well that a hut like that isn't suitable to put a human being into, at any season of the year. If you choose to do it, you'll either have to lay out a few hundreds in repair, or go surety for his life in some other way;" and Roger walked away to the library-table where he had seated Guy.

"Rode takes serious views of things," laughed Tom. "Tell Drake to put on a good fire and dry off a few days before he goes in; and I think the old roof will keep him safe till spring. There may be a pane or two wanting, but he can see to that."

CHAPTER XXIV.

CHRISTMAS PROSPECTS, AND THE CHANCE FOR JOB.

A MONTH passed away—a month of busy work with Guy—and December was shortening down its days to its most grudging mark. Guy had made every one count to its utmost in the matter of study, for the apprenticeship on the farm was still haunting him, and he felt that Nat Limberthorne's "den," and his willingness to keep his pupil in it, might measure the length and breadth of his chance with books, or at least of days left really free to them.

Recitations were sometimes in the morning, sometimes in the afternoon, according to the whim of his instructor, and studies had always been in his own room; but of late Miss Cly had, step by step, brought about a silent understanding that when Guy passed his afternoons at home, the books were to be brought downstairs; and while the old clock ticked the time away, and Guy held on to every minute as it passed, she sat with her own work in her hands, but with eyes resting quite as often upon him. And looking at Guy, thoughts of past, present,

and future came endlessly following in on each other's track. If Guy did not speak for an hour, buried among heroes whose deeds crumbled into legends centuries ago, Miss Cly was holding still closer converse with shapes that had been lost for many a day;—the first Guy, with his proud, bright face, and his hand that had made hers feel so safe in its strong grasp; and the little child that Adam had lifted in at the door, while Blackhawk, tired with the journey, shook himself in the shafts of the old chaise, and rattled the harness as he stood. How strangely Miss Cly seemed to hear the rattle of that harness over and over again, and the sound of the child's feet as they climbed over the great stairs for the first time.

But the child was grown almost a woman as Miss Cly's thoughts went on sometimes. What a graceful fitting every movement of that figure made through the old rooms. How warm and bright they seemed when that fair young face looked in; and how desolate and empty and still when it vanished away, and only the bit of trumpet-vine came back through the old side-door.

And then Miss Cly started with the sudden wonder, always new, that the emptiness was driven out at last. "The boys" had been there all the time, it is true, and they were part of life itself to Miss Cly; but there was a cold, hard feeling of something torn away, a restless craving for some-

thing that was not there, from that sorrowful day until now. And now? And then her eyes would come back to Guy, and seemed burning like brilliants as he looked up and caught them now and then. She was rich again now; the desolate days were forgotten and gone by.

"But neither Nat Limberthorne nor Homer shall break the boy down between them," she said. "He shall have something to stir his veins even in Bolingbroke." And so sure as the sun shone warm and bright, and Tom had proposed no drive, Guy found Holly saddled at the door. Miss Cly had discovered that nothing made his eyes shine like that; and though Holly was Roger's horse, it was arranged in some way that there he stood for Guy; and over the hills they went, his long gait bringing the blood tingling to Guy's cheeks; while Troy kept up at their side or shot ahead, only to come back for a salute and a fresh start.

There were some days already when the December cold was too sharp, but a sudden melting down followed, and one day Guy came in past the post-office after "the best gallop yet."

"I'll just stop and see what luck there is," he said. "Uncle Tom may not have been up."

The door opened as he drew rein, and the leather-coloured face of the old postmaster Jennings appeared through the crack.

"Don't get off, Mr. Powers. I'll pass it out to

you, sir ;” and disappearing for an instant, he returned and hobbled down the steps with a letter in his hand. Only one letter, but even before Guy got hold of it, he knew whom it was from.

It was in his pocket, and Holly was off for home like a shot, before the postmaster had quite turned round on his rheumatic foot ; and before he was fairly settled in his domain again, Guy was springing up the old staircase to his room. He wouldn’t spoil that letter by pulling it open on the street. He would have a fair chance at it this time. The doctor’s letters were short, but they always got half a dozen readings before they went back into Guy’s pocket again.

It was shorter than usual, if that could be, to-day, but long enough to send Guy into an excitement such as he had thought left behind for ever when Bolingbroke closed over his head.

“Christmas,” it said, “is a time, as you know, for every one to get what he wishes. We want to see you down here, and shall look for you in the course of that week. Remember, I have authority ; but I hope you will not oblige me to use it, while your friends will surely be generous for a few days in view of the happiness that belongs to them all the year round. I have a few things to talk over ; and Mrs. Holt says something has been wrong with her room since you left.—Yours always,

“H.

"*P.S.*—What has become of your friend who was going to make a case for Lesseps? Since there has been so much delay, I think it would be safer now to defer the case till a warmer season."

To go down to the doctor! To have a week, or a day even, at home again! And so soon! Without waiting for the "for ever" that he had felt would have to go by? The very thought set a tumult of joy throbbing in his heart, and made the walls of his room look far off, and not the real things they had been a moment before.

But was it possible? Could he really go? Of course he could. Why not? Miss Cly wasn't a gorgon. She wouldn't care about seeing the doctor herself—and Guy laughed involuntarily at the idea, and wondered if she ever would—but so long as he kept at a safe distance, she was too much of a lady to begrudge him a request. And if she knew what it would be to Guy! Well, perhaps she had better not understand quite all it would be; but even guessing the half, he knew what pains she would take to see that there was no trouble in the way. She would be glad, very glad, he was sure. And those few words about Job—what a relief they would be!

He looked at his pile of lessons. It was time to be off to the "den;" but could he ever get his thoughts down to heroes and hypotenuses, and pin them there?

It must be done, and seizing the books required,

he dashed off over the stairs and out of the house in haste. His ride had brought him home late enough, and the indefinite number of letter-readings had left time pretty closely up.

The Limberthorne firs were still sparkling with the remnants of a superb coat of sleet that had come down on them the day before; their great sweeping boughs had bent like laden giants, and had looked heavy and dark through their armour of shining mail. Now the weight had fallen away, drop by drop, and the monstrous arms were lifting again and swaying their millions of brilliants in the wind.

"That's a sight worth seeing, if it is in Bolingbroke," thought Guy; but at that instant an unexpected outline added life, at least, to the view. Wasn't that the squire's figure just stepping into sight from the door-step beyond the tallest fir?

It was the squire himself, whom no Bolingbroker had seen or heard from since the day of the dinner in the mammoth barn.

He started and changed colour slightly as he saw Guy, but in another instant came down the path, and held out his hand as they met.

Guy had time for only a flash of thought, but it seemed to him that wherever the squire had been, or whatever he had been about, some mysterious change had come over the expression of his face. It had always been kindly to Guy, and it was even

more so now, but there was something quite outside of that, that made it indefinably pleasanter than before.

"You did me a favour the other day," he said. "If I can ever do you one in return, let me know."

Guy's face lighted up with his own frank smile, but his heart jumped to his mouth. Now, if ever, was his opportunity for Job! Willing he certainly was; ready must be the word now!

"Indeed I can't think I've been so fortunate," he said, "but I'll accept one from you with a thousand thanks, however little it's deserved, since you are so kind."

"You will? What can I do for you?" asked the squire, looking a little surprised, but not at all displeased at the sudden acceptance of his advance, and Guy found himself the one to hesitate.

How was he to begin? What should he say that would be sure to be the right thing, and get Job out of the frying-pan without tumbling him into the fire? "He's peppery, you know," seemed to echo as a warning to him in Job's voice.

But the squire certainly didn't look peppery just now; the change Guy had just noticed in his face gave him fresh courage, and he plunged in.

"A little forgiveness, that's all, I believe," he said with a half laugh and the same smile that, unconsciously to himself, had conquered many a Bolingbroke before.

"Forgiveness!" echoed the squire in astonishment. "To you?"

"Yes, to me, if I may make it over to a much better fellow than I am. I hope I shall not require it for myself."

The squire looked at him curiously. "And who may this extraordinarily excellent offender be?"

"His name tells his story for him, I believe—poor Hardluck."

The squire reddened a little, and Guy hurried on. "He says he was 'a stupid dolt,' and he's right enough so far, but I believe that was the worst of his fault. He was building more on your favour than he ever had on anything in his life, and he let the very dreaming over what it was to do for him make him forget what he was about. But he's the most penitent old fellow that ever lived."

The squire's face had got back to its first expression, and he looked at Guy with a half-amused smile. "You seem to be unusually posted in Mr. Hardluck's affairs. Is there anything more of interest that you could mention with regard to them to-day?"

For a moment Guy was terribly at a loss. Should he be betraying confidence if he told the whole of Job's story for the last two months? Or could he do him better service than by interesting the squire, if he had skill to do it, in his hopes, and the disappointment that had followed?

The squire noticed his hesitation and interrupted it

hastily. "I beg your pardon. I suppose you meant to say you would like me to take Hardluck back. Of course I cannot imagine what there is in the case to interest you, but since you are interested, that is enough. I have told you already that I am in your debt."

"Oh no, no," exclaimed Guy, quite distressed; and deciding suddenly, he poured out the history of Job's hopes and plans for Meg, the strength with which he had been building upon them, and the crush that his brave old heart had almost failed him under at last.

The question of whether he could interest the squire had vanished from Guy's mind long before he reached the end. He saw that he had succeeded, and went on all the more eloquently for the freedom that the consciousness gave him.

"Why didn't I know this before?" exclaimed the squire, pacing excitedly about. "Why didn't some one tell me what I had done, long ago? So far from balancing our indebtedness, Guy Powers, you have put me under fresh obligation. I may get acquainted with myself by-and-by;" and the squire gave a laugh that was half, but only half bitter, and turned to give Guy a hand again.

"How do you come to do such things?" he said suddenly. "If you will allow me, I'll put Hardluck in again to please myself, and leave an account open with you. Be sure you find something for me to balance it with before long."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE PRINCE IN HIS CASTLE.

CHRISTMAS day had come, clear and cold, and the next morning was to see Guy on his way to the city, in answer to the doctor's request. Miss Cly's eyes had lighted up with pleasure when Guy showed her the letter, but the flash had changed as quickly into a half-troubled look.

"That is delightful, Guy. It will make holiday for me to think you are having a little change from Bolingbroke;" and then she added hurriedly, "But don't like it too well. Don't let it make you forget that we want you here."

It didn't seem that the day was very much used to celebration in the Hollowbloom house, but Tom and Roger had each wished him a "Merry Christmas" as they came down—Tom in his usual cordial way, and Roger with even a little increase of the approach to a friendly look that he had worn for Guy since the affair of the copying. Miss Cly had slipped a fifty-dollar check into his hand, saying, "Not that it is

specially a gift, Guy, but one can't go to the city without pocket-money, and you may see something that you take a fancy to have."

But even that did not tell Guy quite as much as the look with which she returned his wish for her Christmas day.

"My dear Guy! And happier New Years than words can tell. But do you think you could ever have really merry Christmas with us?"

And Job was having his. There was no reason to doubt about that. His eyes were twinkling their brightest, and Meg had her singing-bird at last, for Job was positively engaged to the squire for a year; and since those that knew best bid him wait for the rest till spring, why, by spring, with the extra wages the squire was giving now, everything would be "caught up," and there'd be such a pocketful over as couldn't help being more than enough for even the wonderful thing he hoped to do.

"Didn't I tell you so, Job Hardluck?" he said to himself as he watched Meg's exquisite face, while her pink ear turned to her bird. "Didn't I tell you and the young Hollowbloom, when you were at your very worst, that it was all right? Not that I can ever divine, not that I shall ever while the world stands be able to divine, what turned the squire so completely round to me again, and took the pepper out, so far as I can see, to the very last grain. But nobody could have seemed more pleased than that

young Hollowbloom with the way it came out—nobody, with the way it all came out.”

As for Drake, it was his first Christmas as a householder, and he hadn't taken a step that was not on tiptoe since it dawned. Guy had handed him the key the very day after he had asked for it, and had followed up very soon to see what sort of an interior it had thrown open to its new lord. There were a few panes wanting, as Tom had guessed, and some decidedly tumble-down parts about the house, but the principal room was quite well preserved, and with a good rousing fire might defy the strongest winter blasts.

“Tell Drake to cut all the wood he can burn, from the wood lot,” Tom had said; and Miss Cly had sent up more than one instalment of what seemed to Drake to turn his castle into a palace, so far as sumptuousness was concerned.

“Tell him I don't forget he brought me a letter one day,” Miss Hollowbloom said, as she sent Guy and Holly off with a load; and no Robinson Crusoe's Friday, or Robinson Crusoe himself, was ever more radiant with delight at treasure found, than Drake when he lifted two snowy table-cloths from the top of the pile. Bed linen and towels as white followed next, a few pieces from Nabby's china closet and a pitcher and basin coming last, while a rocking-chair upholstered in gay-flowered chintz stood with an air of ease and festivity behind them all.

It was fortunate for the lord of the palace that Miss Cly's surprises covered as much ground as they did, for a private but very great surprise of his own arose in the discovery of how much and how little a hoarded sum of savings could buy. The stove was the first item that drew on them with a heavy pull; but that must come before even a bed. Drake could sleep on a plank—he had done it many a time; but the fire was to be considered from another point of view.

"Now he can't say it's cold; now he never can say it's too cold again," he cried exultantly, as the first blaze crackled and roared. "He can find a place now when he's ready to read. Drake'll keep it warm." And the full triumph of the imbecile's joy broke forth at last, in waving gestures, and laughter in long musical peals.

"There! there! there!" he exclaimed, when the first Sunday afternoon came, and he saw Guy actually standing before his fire. "Didn't Drake tell you he'd find a place? Didn't I say it belonged to me?"

"You've made a first-rate hit, Drake. I don't believe there's a snugger corner in town," answered Guy as he looked back into Drake's face. Drake had been standing on the door-step for half an hour, watching the brow of the hill over which Guy would come in sight; the wind had blown a glow of colour into his usually pale face, and thrown his long hair a little away, while the eagerness of his watching,

and the joy of getting hold of Guy's coat and fairly dragging him in at last, had given his great brilliant eyes such a shining as even Guy had never seen in them before.

Drake answered by a long low laugh, and a succession of gestures tossed first to one side and then to the other, while he walked away a few steps and looked at Guy, and then came up again to take a closer gaze. "Here," he said, catching Miss Cly's chair by the arm and pulling it to the front, "you must have this."

"And what will you have, Drake?"

Drake answered by drawing up a stool that the postmaster had presented, worn by long use in the conclave round Uncle Hookey's chair. He seated himself upon it, with elbows on his knees, and his eyes still fixed upon Guy.

Suddenly he started to his feet again with an eager question in his face. "Who made her send me all those things? What made him let me have the key? Was it the Friend?"

"Of course it was, Drake. If he hadn't come and shown us how pleasant it is to help our friends, how should we have known?"

Drake still looked doubtful and kept his hold on Guy's sleeve. "But what made her call me a friend? I didn't belong to her. I didn't belong to anybody. Was it Him?"

"What made Him call us his friends? Don't you

see, Drake? He taught us—at least he tried to teach us—to be like him?”

Drake dropped his hold on Guy's arm, and settled back to his first posture with a satisfied, radiant face.

“Now we are ready,” he said; “now we are ready to begin!” and Guy went on with the reading, that had only one fault—Drake could never be convinced that it was long enough.

That was the first visit. Christmas day had come, now, and with it a plump chicken from Nabby, roasted crisp and brown, and two pots of primroses from Miss Cly, full of pink and yellow blossoms, and promising to send up fresh flower-stalks without a break, till Drake could find dandelions outside again.

Drake stood transfixed before his flowers, the chintz rocking-chair and all other treasures out of sight, while his hand advanced a dozen times to take one for his button-hole, and as often drew grudgingly away. But he was quieter than he had been with any of the other gifts.

“Drake,” said Guy, “you know whose birthday this is?”

“Hosanna! Blessed be the King!” answered Drake with a triumphant toss of his arms.

It was one of the bits of Guy's reading that Drake had caught and stored away. Such fragments were not many at first, and they were always short, but they were growing in number with every week. No one would ever dream of the hours the poor fellow

sat alone, or lay with his eyes wide open in the dark, repeating one after another of these morsels, with all sense of solitude gone, and only joy and an idea of treasure filling up its place.

"Drake, I wish you would learn to read about Him yourself. Suppose you try?"

Drake turned with a flush of delight, followed as quickly by the old look of trouble, as he shook his head. "I can't, you know; I'm too queer."

"Drake, didn't they teach you once, long ago? It might come back if you tried. I'm sure it would. I'll read to you when I can, but think how many days you're quite by yourself."

He didn't add, "There may come a day when I won't be here to do it;" there was no use in telling Drake that just now.

"There are not many books that stoop low enough or rise high enough—I don't know which to call it—for poor Drake's range," he thought; "but there are some; and there are all the 'verses,' as he calls them, that he thinks so much of. I could find him heaps of things, if he could only take hold of them. I wonder if he couldn't learn? There must be some horridly lonely times up here."

"Let's just try it, Drake," he said; and he picked up a card with the verses that were Drake's special treasure and delight:—

"One there is, above all others,
Well deserves the name of Friend."

Many an evening he had sat holding it, saying over and over all he could recall, and happy with only feeling that Guy had given it to him for his own.

The first lesson was a short one, but Guy got a ray or two of hope out of it, after all. It wasn't altogether encouraging at first to see Drake shake his head vacantly at one letter after another as it came, but now and then a sudden gleam, that seemed to Guy half-recollection, lighted his face again. Guy didn't build much upon that, however. He knew that the brighter part of Drake's life had been a blank for twenty years: recollection wasn't going to do much; that was plain. But still, strange and wandering as the poor boy's mind was left, there was still more or less mind there. If it had measured like his heart, Drake would have been a giant in intellect. As it was, Guy did not feel at all sure that there wasn't enough intelligence left to learn to read. Why hadn't he thought of it before?

"Table-cloths!" muttered Roger when, by some chance word dropped, he got hold of that item, with a few others, among the house-warmings that Holly had been taking up to Drake.

"Isn't the fellow demented enough already, that you want to make a fool of him again? What idea do you suppose he'll have about one of those things? He may develop his brain by studying over their probable use; there's something in that."

"I have sent him only what his mother accustomed

him to for his first ten years," answered Miss Cly quietly. "We might call it done for her sake, if you don't approve of it for his."

"By the way, Guy," interrupted Tom, "what's this news I hear about your venturing back to the great world?"

"I'm going to try it to-morrow for a few days, Uncle Tom. Won't you risk me to come back all right?"

Guy felt a twinge that suggested he might have said "come home," but he couldn't quite speak the word. He was going home, that was the truth in the bottom of his heart. Still, the other expression didn't seem as impossible as it had once appeared. He should come to it some day, if they would only give him time.

Tom laughed. "I shall have my anxieties till I get you here safe again," he said. "I shall be more afraid of kidnappers than of anything else."

Roger laid down his book and looked at Guy. He seemed to be hesitating over some extraordinary movement of his mind.

"Give my compliments to that doctor's wife, if you please. She is as ladylike a woman as I have seen."

"Good for Uncle Roger!" laughed Guy when he got safely to his room. "If the doctor could only know what a compliment that is!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

PLANS AND PERPLEXITY.

"GUY," said Dr. Holt, as they sat at the dinner-table the next night, "do you think you have a precisely adequate idea of what it seems to get you into the house again? These holidays have got to stretch a little, in some way. I ordered you down, but I said nothing of the time when you would be allowed to go back."

Guy laughed. The doctor could have no "adequate idea" of what it had been to him that afternoon to see trees and fences flying to the rear as the train pushed on; so they were even, as far as that went. And when the train stopped at last! Was it possible it was the very station into which he had followed Roger with such a leaden heart only three months before? Was it only three months? Not three and a half, he believed. It had seemed a long year; and yet as he had driven through the familiar streets to-day, the whole time was forgotten like a dream. He had come through Little Picco, and then through the one down which his father had watched the old

harper drag himself away; then past the very house, and had glanced up at the very window through which he himself had watched and wondered as he saw him go.

How strange it seemed to pass it and not go in! If he were to open the door, would there be no dear noble face in the old room to welcome him?

He turned his head away; he couldn't quite bear that thought.

And one of the strangest things of all was to ask if he and that looker through the window were really the same. It couldn't be. What did that boy know about life? How young, how happy, how utterly different he was!

And was not he happy himself? He wouldn't say that he was not, but it was with happiness that came in such a different way. It was a better happiness than the former, in some respects; but he felt years, half a lifetime in fact, older in others; and the old cry came up once more, "Papa! papa!"

But Guy quieted it the old way, too, and before he reached the doctor's door he was quite settled again in the pleasure with which he had set out. The happiest part of it all was that he was in the city that had been his father's home, and that the doctor had been his father's dearest friend.

The doctor's coupé had been sent to meet him, and Dan had brought him down. That was the best the doctor could do, so far; but he had promised to be in

punctually at dinner, and that didn't happen every day in the year.

There was no one in the drawing-room. Mrs. Holt had sent word that he was to come upstairs; and he went with an eagerness that made Dan look up and pursue a few reflections to himself. He should think those people that had got young Mr. Powers away from the doctor had been keeping him in a dungeon, by the gladness he was letting off to get out! But Guy was at the top, and at the boudoir door, by that time. It was open for him before he knocked.

"My dear Guy, how very glad I am. But how you have grown! And how well you look! just glowing with health. I shall be jealous of those friends of yours. I shall indeed."

Guy thought with half a pang that jealousy might belong somewhere else if Aunt Cly were to see the "glow." She would know that it was happiness, and not health, that had brought it suddenly up. Even the tone of that "How very glad I am" had done its share.

"Dear, kind Aunt Cly," he thought. "I should be an ungrateful fellow indeed if I didn't love her well; but it is such a comfort to have somebody speak once in a while."

"Now come in at once, my dear boy," Mrs. Holt went on, laying her hand on his arm. "I shall have you all to myself a little while, before the doctor gets home; though I see I mustn't say 'my dear boy'

much longer to such a man as you've grown. The doctor'll take you all to himself the moment he comes in, so I must make the most of my chance. And how are your kind friends in Bolingbroke? All very well, I trust?"

"All very well, thank you," answered Guy, with a gleam of fun coming into his eyes as Roger's message returned to his thoughts,—“especially my Uncle Roger. Do you remember how you beamed on him, to thaw him out for me, on that dismal day? Well, I don't think he's ever recovered, for he sent you his compliments, and I'm sure he never did such a thing before in his life. And if you could but know him, you'd realize what it is to lay him low.”

All this was fresh in Guy's thoughts as the doctor began talking of long holidays at the dinner-table. The doctor went on: “Now if we had but a sensible, well-grown boy of about your age that we could keep. But as we haven't—how are those studies of yours getting on? About two years you want, I suppose, to finish them up?”

“About that time, I believe,” answered Guy, with a twinge-like recollection of what Tom had said about getting ready to drill on the farm. How had the doctor ever found out about their plans?

“And whom have you found to hold the birch rod for you out there? Some spectacled pedagogue with a snuffy coat? And do the rest of his pupils, your schoolmates, wear shoes and comb their hair?”

"Oh, fy, doctor," said Mrs. Holt. "Guy mustn't answer you. I dare say Mr. Roger Hollowbloom was educated there, and he is a gentleman, as you would have to admit—especially if you knew the compliment he was pleased to send."

"Yes, he must answer. Next to knowing whether he is treated well, I am most anxious about this Greek and Latin business."

So Guy gave an animated account of Nat Limberthorne and his "den."

The days passed but too swiftly by. The doctor Guy had only by snatches, but a single snatch seemed reward for a month of Bolingbroke; and there was always the room at the top of the stairs, and there were old haunts and associations; and at last an unusual fall of snow touched the park as with a wizard's hand, and peopled it with a world of half-wild, joyous folk.

Guy thought Mrs. Holt's turn-out the daintiest and most perfect in the whole brilliant whirl; and she assured him she was proud of it herself, now that she had him to hold the reins.

"If I only had Shanter, though, to show these people a horse," he said more than once as they sped away; and then his thoughts would go further still, and he could almost hear the old clock tick as Miss Cly sat there waiting for the boys. She would be impatient; she would want to see the mail. Guy was sure of that, and he liked to watch the time

himself and think they must be coming now. Now she must have received his first letter; now, his second; and indeed he had put all the loving expressions into each that he dared.

How much a Hollowbloom would like said, he wasn't sure, but for the rest, he had filled up with all the lively chat about what he was seeing and doing that the letters would hold.

And so the week was gone before Guy could believe that it was fairly begun.

"But what difference does that make?" asked the doctor. "No one can resist my sign and seal."

"I don't know," laughed Guy. "My pedagogue, as you call him, would resist one man as soon as another, I think; and if I get him out of humour, he may not give me even my two years." And then Guy began to say something about his room. He had not spoken of it to the doctor yet, though his thanks to Mrs. Holt had made her turn her face to the window and tell Guy hastily to say no more. She did not want him to see her cry.

He had gone up to it expecting to find everything as it was three months ago, as it had looked that first utterly desolate night, and again as it grew precious with the sense of home, as friends had grown dearer, and, above all, as the one Wonderful Friend had drawn close.

But as he opened the door he stood more startled than when he saw the old cabinet under the antlers

in the other house. It was as if the sacred rooms, that he had thought dismantled for ever, had opened to him again. The dear old furniture, that he had thought of and yet tried not to think of, as stored in some ghostly wareroom for cobwebs and dust to gather on, was here—every piece that he could specially value or care to use.

"I am glad you are pleased, Guy," said the doctor quietly; "but what else should we do? The room will be kept expressly for your visits here, and will be all ready when you come to stay."

"When I come to stay?" echoed Guy, the blood flooding up to his temples, and then beating as quickly back, and leaving him with a cold, dull sense of something snatched away. The doctor could never know how cruel it was to hold up such a thing in a few careless words that could mean in reality nothing at all.

"Yes," repeated the doctor. "I will wait two years if I must; but you will be fitted for college then, I think you said."

"For college? Oh, I shall be fitted for college in a year, Mr. Limberthorne says."

It was the doctor's turn to get excited now. "In one year!" he exclaimed. "Is it possible I can have you here in one year?"

What was he talking about? thought Guy. But Dr. Holt went hurriedly on. "Did you not tell me a few days ago that you needed two years more to finish up?"

"I said I supposed two years more would finish up—would be all I could hope to have. I don't expect to go to college; at least, I'm very much afraid—"

"Indeed. And pray may I ask what your expectations are?"

A quick rush of colour flushed Guy's face again; but instead of the feeling that sent it before, the boy was conscious this time of a dismal sort of pain, mingled with half a mind to laugh, as the thought of Tom and the mud-boots came up.

"To be a farmer, I believe, if you've no objection," he said, letting the laugh get the best of it and come uppermost.

"*A farmer!*"

The doctor started up and came across the room to look at Guy. Was he parting with his senses, or were those friends of his, those unknown Bolingbroke people, forgetting that he had a guardian, and taking the reins into their own hands?

"And how long is it since you completed these arrangements for your two years and the settlement to follow?"

"I?" said Guy, laughing again, though half distressed at the way in which the doctor seemed taking the matter; "it's no arrangement of mine; you must know that, of course. But I think it's the plan they have for me out there. I don't know. I couldn't make up my mind really to ask. But Uncle Tom has said so more than once, when I

thought he meant it; and my aunt only asked how I should be pleased. There's a valuable farm, and Uncle Tom and Uncle Roger don't want the plague of it. I suppose it really ought to have some one in the family to look out for it. Of course the thing has a hobgoblin look to me just now, but I shall get used to the idea."

The doctor uttered an exclamation of annoyance, and walked to a library table, where he busied himself a moment with his back to Guy. When he turned, it was with a look of quiet amusement on his face.

"You will be rather a youthful farmer to trust with family acres of such value. Your friends must have great confidence in your skill."

"Oh, they don't mean to give it to me right away. It is leased for four years. If I get two years more at study, Uncle Tom was talking of putting me on the farm then, to drill till the lease is out. I shall be twenty by that time."

"Oh, I see; it is all admirably arranged."

What did he mean by that quiet look, as if he could afford to be amused, and when it was all so horribly serious to poor Guy?

He drew a few lines absently on a bit of paper, and then looked up at Guy. "Now there's a slightly different way in which we might reckon and arrange. Suppose you enter college next year. You will be seventeen then. Four years more will make you

twenty-one. After that you will no longer have a guardian; you will decide for yourself, without consulting any one. If the farm should still be there, you could begin your apprenticeship then. Don't you think it would be in plenty of time? You would have the accumulated wisdom of years to bestow on it in that case, you know!"

Guy started, as a prisoner might who heard some one breaking out bars. A "guardian"! He had never thought of the doctor as anything but a friend, and this guardianship business he had looked at as a mere form of law. He knew that if he had inherited a fortune, the doctor would have had the care of it; but as there was no such encumbrance, he had given the relationship very little thought. Of course, any wish of the doctor's would seem next to his father's in his heart; but now that his father was gone, he had thought of the Hollowbloom house as having the only positive hold on him.

Was it possible the doctor had a right to say what should be done with the next four long years? Could he throw turnips and corn-stacks out of sight for that time, and put a thorough education and culture of whatever talent Guy had in their place? Could he take him for four years out of Bolingbroke, where he should always have that strange, stifled feeling, as if he were only half getting his breath? He would stay there for some time for Aunt Cly's

sake, whatever came; but to think of a respite like that!

"You don't answer," said the doctor. "Don't you like my arithmetic?"

"Like it!" exclaimed Guy; and then a sudden change dashed the light out of his face. No, it could never be. There were some things that even the doctor's will could not change.

But in another instant he controlled himself. Why should he worry the doctor by making a fuss? He couldn't go through college without a cent to pay his bills, of course. If Aunt Cly had chosen to send him, and to say he had claim enough on the estate to cover the expense, it would have been all right; but since she did not, that was the end of it. There was no one else on the face of the earth that he would take the money from; and if he stopped to earn it, as he knew he could, the four years would get whittled down altogether too much. And besides, if there were ever so much money, and he should seem ungrateful to Aunt Cly, it would never do. He would not vex her by going against her will. He would not hurt her by going if she would miss him too much.

"No, I *don't* see that it can't be," said the doctor, answering the look on Guy's face. "Indeed I see no difficulty whatever in the way."

"But Aunt Cly has been too kind. And you know," hurried in Guy, "Judge Throckmorton must

have told you that I haven't anything. I haven't the means to do whatever I may happen to like best; or even what you may wish me to do, which is more important, of course."

"But suppose," continued the doctor with his eyes bent on the bit of paper he was scribbling on again—"suppose I have the means to arrange for your doing what I wish?"

Guy felt himself turn scarlet, and he sprang up with just such an "Oh no, no!" as he had heard from Job when he tried him in the same way.

"Guy," said the doctor, starting up too, and then quietly putting Guy back in his chair and taking his arm again, "listen to me. I told you, when you had spent your first few days in my house, how much I wanted, how much we both wanted, to keep you in it; how a shadow had come over it that you could drive away—a sorrowful, grieving want, that you could fill. There seemed reasons why, hard as it was, I ought to give you up at that time; but from the moment you chose me as the one who should make plans for you, I made this for you and for myself. It was right you should go to the friends whom your father and mother chose, and who had the claim of blood to hold you by; but it is right, also, that you should be fitted for your work and your place in the world by such advantages as your father always meant to provide. Now I have been waiting, and counting the years

and the months, which I find to my joy I had doubled, till you should be ready for university work. Then I want to bring you here, where the best of opportunities are open, and keep you in my house for the college years. In vacations I'll give you a ticket of leave, and you shall go and make yourself as delightful as you please to the Bolingbroke friends, and toss hay or hoe carrots as you like;" and the doctor looked at Guy with a bright smile.

"But I can't. Didn't you hear me say—don't you know I can't? You know how I love you. You know you are next to papa. I would do anything you wished in the world, if it could be done. But they wouldn't consent; and if they would—you can't ask me to be a beggar! You wouldn't ever force me to be that!"

"But, my dear boy, this time I am the beggar, and I beg with all joy and willingness."

"Oh, don't, don't!" cried Guy excitedly; and darting from the room, he sprang up the stairs, passed Mrs. Holt's door, which was standing ajar for him, and closed his own with such a tumult of bitterness as he had not felt since those terrible days when he first found out what trouble was.

If the doctor only hadn't offered it to him! If he had left him as he was! He was just reconciled a little to Bolingbroke, and had got the fight about staying there over and out of his mind; and he

must stay. And yet here was the doctor holding out more than he had thought the world could ever offer him again—all he could ever ask it to give.

He couldn't bear this. How was he ever to find any "ready and willing" to meet this?

But he would find it! He threw himself into the very chair the doctor had drawn up for him beside his father's bed, and tried to look it all over once more.

He couldn't leave Aunt Cly, even for only four years, if it should be contrary to her positive will; and positive he had discovered her will to be when it touched anything at all. And he couldn't be a beggar; he had said that to Miss Cly herself in that first talk, when talking to her seemed sounding an unknown sea. The doctor wouldn't, couldn't force him to either of those things.

And even if the first were out of the way, if Aunt Cly didn't really object, the other was sure to be there. Nothing could move that. She would never think of sending Hollowbloom money to the doctor; and how should she think there was any claim upon it for expenses that she didn't wish incurred, when she wanted Guy at home, and only yielded the point of necessity to a man whom she would like the less for urging it?

"I shall never ask her, at all events," he said. "But—O papa! 'Ready and willing.' You said it would be hard sometimes. Did you think it would ever be quite so hard as this!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

BOLINGBROKE AGAIN.

"WHY, where is Guy?" asked Mrs. Holt as the doctor entered her room. "I thought he was with you, and then thought I heard his steps flying over the stairs."

"He's the finest boy that ever trod the earth! The more I'm thwarted in getting him, the more I want him," exclaimed the doctor excitedly. "But the young scamp—he's actually setting up his will against mine, his guardian's! And what do you think it's all about? I believe the fellow loves us, and I believe he'd be thoroughly glad to get out of that Sleepyhollow where they're burying him alive; but he thinks it's his duty to stay by those mysterious friends of his, and he sticks to it like a Trojan. And worse than all that—for I might get the thing settled with the people themselves—he's got the notion he'll be taking more than he gives if he comes here; and there he is like a rock."

"But can't he see? Can't you make him believe?"

"You may try it," said the doctor with a laugh,

half rueful and half admiring. "I'm glad of it, though. I like every inch of his pluck. But we must get round it in some way. I'll have that boy, if I have to serve for him as long as Jacob did for Rachel. Not that I'd really take him from the people he's with, since they're tormenting enough to exist; but they've got to lend him to some one for four years, and it may as well be to us. After that, we'll see what comes next."

"But his friends have means. Surely they would provide for his education, if that's all that troubles the boy."

"I don't know. Evidently he didn't think so. They're talking about—what do you think?—making a farmer of the boy!"

Mrs. Holt looked at her husband with trouble in her eyes. Her own boy would have been just Guy's age, would have had just his colouring and form, she often thought, as she watched Guy going about the house. And Guy had seemed to step into the vacant place. He had grown dear before he left them first, in fact, and now it seemed as if he must be theirs. The doctor had told her his plan in the outset, and she had cherished it almost as impatiently as himself.

"But the boy must have been mistaken. Don't you think he may be? That Mr. Hollowbloom looked like a sensible man; and any one can see that Guy's not the stuff a farmer should be made of. He hasn't the physical strength, for one thing; never

will have, of course. Can't you sound his friends in some way?"

"Yes, I shall do it, certainly; but perhaps it will be wise to let the matter rest for just now. Guy seemed a good deal stirred up; and cautious advances will be as well with the Hollowblooms. There isn't much time, though; he'll be ready in a year, instead of two."

"In a year! Then there's one year saved to us. He will be young, though. But not if he ages as he has for the last four months. Did you ever see such a change in that length of time? The poor boy has lived his way into the look of a man since then."

The doctor was already leaving the room. He hadn't been in so long after dinner for a year.

"I stole the time on purpose for a talk with Guy—borrowed it, I suppose I might say, for I got it by turning my clinique over to Parker this afternoon. I shall take his some day, of course. His prince-ship, upstairs there, has cut me short, after all; but never mind. I'm sorry the boy takes the thing just so; he's had ruffling enough. But he'll see it differently some time. I'd better drop the subject for a while. If you get a chance to use your wiles on him, all right."

The doctor closed the door, and Mrs. Holt opened the piano and sat down. Guy liked music, she knew that, and perhaps it would bring him downstairs.

She played on, never guessing that the symphony she had opened at random was the same in which Guy had found such rest and soothing with his violin, the one only time he had ever taken it from its case in the Hollowbloom house; the same whose every note seemed an echo from his father's touch.

She finished it, laid it aside and waited, and then opened another in its place; but still Guy did not come. He was having a hard fight of it this time. The music was helpful though, little as she could guess how it was.

But the door opened at last, and he was looking in with a face that told her a part, though only a part, of what had been going on. Whatever trouble he had been in, it was all settled now, and he met her eye with a bright smile; only he was looking about the room a little anxiously. Was the doctor gone? he wondered.

"Oh, I might have known he couldn't stay. But I wanted to speak to him. I'm afraid he thinks me the most ungrateful—"

"He thinks nothing of the kind. He thinks nothing at all, except that you have a way of getting dearer to us both all the time. Come," and she held out her hand, "I can't let you stop to talk any foolishness now. I want you to take me out. There's some music this evening that it will do us both good to hear."

"But I *must* talk to you. I'm afraid the doctor

won't come in, and I want you to tell him—I'm afraid I seemed—"

"Yes, yes, I'll tell him everything. Not that he needs to be told anything; but we all like to get more than belongs to us. Now let us go, dear. I shan't have a boy of my own to take me out every night in the year."

That was the end of the subject for that visit. The day that must be called the last came so soon that no one was quite willing to admit that it was there. There were very few words spoken that seemed to recognize the fact, and the sleigh-ride in the Park was the swiftest and gayest yet. Only, as the doctor went out just before them, Mrs. Holt had asked if Dan was to drive Guy up; and her husband had answered, "No, I shall see him off myself." And when the ride was over, and Guy handed her into the house, she turned and laid her hand upon his arm with a quick look that was hard to withstand.

"Guy dear, I wish you could know what this visit has been to us, and how we shall miss you out of our house. I wish you *could* understand that the more time you will give us in it, the more deeply you put us in your debt. Can't you believe it? You will, I am sure, and you must get those kind friends of yours to share with us a little more. We shall find some way to persuade them as time goes on."

The doctor was punctual to the moment, although it was plain that Dan had driven his steed from some distant part of the city in hurry enough. He shut the door and was in his seat again in a moment, the horse's head was turned toward the station, and they were off.

A sudden rush of recollections made such a contrast between to-day's ride and the other that Guy had taken in the same direction, that he only looked across at the doctor with his happiest smile. He forgot that Bolingbroke was ahead; he forgot the ghost of Roger's cold, polite face that had haunted the thought of the trip. It was enough that the doctor was there, and that he had him all to himself for one more fifteen minutes' drive.

But fifteen minutes do not last long, however much happiness they may hold. Guy thought Dan must have galloped the horse, the station came in sight so soon, and there was no time to be lost.

"Guy," said the doctor, as he gave him a parting grasp at the car-window, "tell that pedagogue of yours we want more vacations, and longer ones. They all belong to us this year. If they ever fall to anybody else, I suppose turn about will be fair play; but there's time enough to settle that. Good-bye, my boy. God bless you, and bring you back."

So the doctor hadn't given up his plan, though he had been so silent about it since that night. How should Guy ever persuade him that he must? He

had fought the fight out with himself once more; he was ready to stay in Bolingbroke, and willing to meet the duty that kept him there, and the poverty that would make the doctor's project impracticable, even if Aunt Cly should consent to it. But it seemed the drop too much to have to plead against himself with the doctor.

He must do it, though; and he must write and tell him all it had seemed impossible to speak, of the love and the gratitude with which his heart seemed ten times full, and the joy it was to be with him for an hour, or with Mrs. Holt—it was *almost* the same with her.

The train whirled on, and the fifty miles were passed before Guy realized that half the distance had slipped away. He found himself wondering whether this was the country he had thought so dismal when he ran over it the first time; there were a good many comfortable-looking places, certainly; and then came the rocky belt where he had pumped Roger on geology; and at last the thin-voiced brakeman piped out, "Bolingbroke!" once more, and the engineer bumped the train together for the Bolingbrokers to alight.

Guy started up at the call, and even in his hurry had time to be surprised that it had such a different sound from that dismal day four months ago. Was it possible that he was getting out with a little touch of the feeling that he had reached home? He

certainly was thinking how long it was since he had left Aunt Cly, and how pleasant it would be to see her again.

He walked quickly along the platform, satchel in hand, with no thought but of scrambling up the hill, when some one halted in front of him, and there was Tom.

"So you're back all right, and no harm has come of it, after all. Glad to see you. Up with you there, youngster." And Tom was taking his things, and there was Holly's well-known shape, and Roger seated in the waggon behind, waiting for Guy, and actually, unmistakably, with a pleased look on his face.

"In with you," said Tom again. "Never mind me. Rode'll take you up, and I'll be there in ten minutes. I want to see a man down here."

"About bedtime, then, he'll be up," said Roger as Guy clambered in. "How are you, boy? You look as if you'd fared well since you left. What does that lank-haired fellow mean by all those gyrations there?"

Guy looked behind him. Drake had not missed a train for the last three days; and more than one engineer had whistled sharply at him, as he pressed up against the track. He might catch sight of a face he was looking for as the train whirled in. He had his reward at last, and was signalling welcomes, which would have been missed, after all, but for Roger's eyes.

The blind through which Miss Hollowbloom had caught her glimpse of Drake, on the memorable day when he turned letter-carrier in her behalf, was wide open now, to let in the grudging winter light, and she could command a clear view down the road without leaving her chair, since the chestnuts had dropped their leaves. Her eyes had been following it with impatient sweeps for ten minutes before Holly's head met them, as he came swinging up the hill. She shot one more hurried look to see whom the waggon held, and the next moment was at the west-side door.

Guy almost started as he stepped inside, at the eager welcome in her face; and before she had recovered herself, she had stooped and touched his forehead with one swift kiss.

"Come in, child," she said. "It has been very lonely since you left."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"D R I P S."

AND so life in Bolingbroke had begun again: the break in it had given a strange feeling at first, but in a day or two everything was settled into shape, and Guy found himself wondering if he had ever lived anywhere else. The old life seemed so far away again, and the certainty so strong that the future was going to be Bolingbroke, so long as that future should last.

The winter wore away. After the days begin to lengthen, there are but three months left, and the three months seem to slip by faster and faster as their hours of daylight gain. It was a strong, steady pull of work with Guy; he was making the most of the chance with Nat.

"There's no telling how long it may last," he was always saying over to himself. "And besides, since I've once said I could fit in a year, I won't miss it if will can do the work. Not that it makes any difference as to going off; that's one thing there's no use in being ready for. But I'd like to feel I've done it, since I said I could."

It was close work, and there was no break, and little recreation or change, except the rides on Holly, with an occasional one after Shanter, and the faithful visits to Drake. Miss Hollowbloom looked at Guy anxiously when she could do it unobserved; and Nabby confided her own views to Adam in a way that set him to rubbing his head with a confusion of ideas.

"That boy is wearing soul and body apart with work the squire's brother ought to know better than let him do. He'll never have his living to earn, and what is the use? There's enough in the family, dear knows, to make half a dozen rich, and it's plain to be seen he's the one provided to save its scattering to the winds. Hollowbloom money and Hollowbloom blood will keep together, after all; and there's not one in the house as isn't pleased out of bounds to have it so: moreover and besides, the boy has made himself the apple of the eye already to more than one of the three, whether he knows it or not, which it strikes me he hasn't the least glimmering of an idea."

Miss Hollowbloom had quite as many reflections as Nabby, though they took rather a different turn.

"Guy," she said more than once, "I think you are doing too much. You ought to take a holiday again."

But Guy only laughed, and plunged into his books again. "I'm as well as can be, Aunt Cly. You're

too kind, that's all. You don't want me coming out an empty head, after such opportunities as I have."

But Miss Cly wasn't satisfied, and took another searching look as soon as Guy was engrossed. Yes, very thin, she thought; and that was not all. There was the same look she had noticed long ago—happy and satisfied; and yet there was something else—some indefinable look of the mouth and the eyes that pain seemed to have left. The boy had grown older, it was true, strangely older in the last few months; but he was too young, far too young, for a look like that.

The utmost day of winter came at last—the end of March, it is true; but that month had been too churlish and hard to be reckoned into spring. April was coming now, and its first week brought relenting. Soft winds began to blow and soft skies to shine. The earth grew warm and dry, and Drake was already watching with glee the dandelion buds he had discovered on his daily tramp. The roads had been forlorn with mud, and Holly had been seldom called for; but now, on one bright day that came, he and Guy were off for a dry, smooth dash, Troy even stirring a little dust as he bounded on in advance.

But there would be no dust when they got home, that was plain. They were two miles away yet, when a black-fringed cloud came suddenly lifting into sight: April was going to pour down one of

its most mischievous duckings before many minutes were past.

"We'll just have time to hit Drake's," Guy thought, and gave the rein a toss. Holly put down his head and took the road with a swing, and the toppled-off chimney soon came in sight.

"Oh, you're there, are you? And how is it about shelter for man and beast?" laughed Guy, as Drake appeared in the door with his wildest gestures of delight.

"We've got it! we've got it!" answered Drake, seizing Holly's rein and leading him to an absurd little relic of a shed, while Guy made his way into the house. A book lay on the table, for Drake was making literary efforts that were quite as heroic as Guy's; unfortunately, though, with less successful results. The fiftieth pull seemed to find him no further advanced than the first, and Guy had felt sorry for a while that study had ever been proposed. But he soon saw that there was no worry in it to Drake, while the attempt and the idea of a conquest were pastime, and helped away a good many lonely hours; so Guy let his pupil go on, though it was clear that his progress would never be much of a feather in the teacher's cap.

The cloud seemed to burst over the house with special revenge for Guy's escape. Spouts splashed and poured over the roof in a whirl; they dashed against the windows, and pattered into the old chim-

ney like mischievous sprites, and Drake laughed gleefully.

"This will bring flowers," he said. "Violets will come after this, and all kinds. The woods will be full to-morrow."

Guy went to the window and looked out. The cloud had lightened already and was speeding by; only the fringed edge was overhead now, and that had faded from black to gray.

"It will be over in a moment," he said. "Yes, there is a gleam of sunshine now;" and he turned again. But what was that running over the floor? A stream of water as wide as his hand.

"What's that? Where does that come from?"

Drake pointed overhead. "Leaks—plenty of them up there. When it rains fast they come like this. If it is slow, they drip, drip."

"That's a nice state of things," said Guy. The winter had been so cozy by Drake's fire that he had forgotten Roger's warning about repairs. He glanced up at the ceiling and saw the yellow stains and the opening cracks that did not need Drake to tell the tale.

But Drake only laughed; a little water seemed a small trouble to him. "It is warm now," he said. "When it is cold it only snows. There's no drip then."

"I should think not. I shall have to see your landlord about this."

He sprung into the saddle and was out of sight; but Drake stood for a moment longer on the door-step, with his great, brilliant eyes following down Guy's track. Then seizing his hat, he fastened a bunch of primroses in it, and set off on his own beat. He could afford the primroses at last, if violets and dandelions were at hand.

When Guy reached home, for a marvel he found Tom sitting in the house; and for a second marvel, alone. It was the very opportunity to speak to him about the roof; and he wasn't loath to use it, for that stream of water running over Drake's floor was still before his eyes.

"Well, youngster, did you get a ducking? Never mind; it will make you grow."

"No, Uncle Tom, I got a roof of yours over my head, luckily for me. But unluckily for the one it covers by the year, there seems to be a good deal of the sieve about it;" and he gave Tom a description of affairs.

"So Drake is getting shower-baths free, with his rent, is he?" laughed Tom. "That'll never do. Some of those fine things Cly sent up there might be spoiled. I must see to that. Drake's a good fellow, and doesn't have too much luxury in life. We must keep his corner dry, at least. In fact, I meant to ask how it was before. I'll see to it in the course of a few days. We shan't get anything but light showers for the rest of this month."

"If Drake doesn't get something more, 'twill be no thanks to you," said Roger's voice from inside the library-door. Why could Guy never remember that Roger was almost sure to be there? "If he doesn't get a typhoid fever before you get ready to prevent it, it will be good luck. I told you in the outset it was no place to put a human being into. In fact, the whole concern is a disgrace to the farm and the family;—a shabby, tumble-down hovel, that ought to have been pulled over long ago. If you take my advice, you'll turn Drake out and clear the whole thing off. 'Twill be for his good and yours; there are plenty of other places where he can use table-cloths, if that is necessary for his pleasure in life."

"Don't get excited, Rode. It's a very picturesque little place, and a small amount of patching will make it dry as a drum. How am I going to turn out a tenant like that, if he has a fancy for the house? I'll see to it all in good time."

"Well, understand that I wash *my* hands of the business, that's all;" and Roger went out, his firm, steady tramp a little quicker than usual as he passed down the old hall.

As Guy sat engrossed with his books that evening, something in his face seemed to attract Tom's attention, as he stood looking half-curiously at it for a few moments, until some magnetism made Guy lift his eyes, when Tom turned hastily away.

But the next day he stopped as he was passing Cly, and said, "What's the matter with that boy of yours? Doesn't Bolingbroke agree with him, or is Nat Limberthorne driving him too hard? He's as peaked as a ghost. Aren't you giving him enough to eat?"

A troubled look, that for once Miss Hollowbloom could not quite conceal, met Tom's inquiring one. *Was* it Bolingbroke? It *must* be managed in some way that Guy could be well and happy in Bolingbroke. What diversion could she devise? He needed a young companion. What had become of his violin?

"Guy is working too hard. He must take a vacation," she said; and at that moment he entered the room.

"Oh, here you are," said Tom. "Come along for a run with Shanter; it'll do you good. The creature wants exercise, and you've been digging for Nat Limberthorne long enough. I'll show you that farm of yours; they're opening up work upon it at a great rate. The sooner you get interested the better. Eh, Cly?"

"Aunt Cly," said Guy suddenly, "do you really want me to take the farm?"

Miss Cly looked at him with anxiety still uppermost in her mind. If the boy wasn't going to bear study, if books and indoor life were going to break him down, she would make any sacrifice rather than that.

"If it seems best, Guy," she said quietly, trying not to let him see whether she cared; and Tom laughed again and hurried him off.

"We'll stop and encourage Drake about his 'drips,' if he happens to be in sight," he said; and they were off.

"That settles it, then," Guy was saying to himself as they rode on. "Aunt Cly means it; I am sure of it now. It will have to be a fight with the doctor; but I can't go against Aunt Cly. And even if I could—if I could let him get me a reprieve till I'm twenty-one—where's the money coming from? 'Twould never be Hollowbloom money in that case, of course, and that's the only treasury on the face of the earth where I have any claim to dip. The doctor is kind, a hundred times too kind, but I can't do it. I should know myself to be beggar, and it would kill me. I can never be that."

So then if it was settled, settled it must be. Guy tried to put the thought of what had been offered him behind his back and out of sight; but it was almost like another death and funeral. He had not thought that anything could ever seem so like letting his father go, as saying good-bye to this scheme of the doctor's, whose accomplishment would have given him almost a father and a mother again—the doctor himself, home, happiness beyond the reach of words.

"But I'm ready—I'm ready and willing. I will

be so. And I shall always have the Wonderful One. What more do I need?" he repeated as many times as the struggle came up. It had been hard enough before, but there had been just a glimmer of hope. But perhaps it was better, after all, that the hope was now gone. It is always better to feel something positive under one's feet.

It was the not getting quite settled that had worn on him so. He was beginning to feel a little tired, too, with work; he was forced to admit that to himself. Cramming, Nat called it, he believed; but June would be here soon. He couldn't afford to lose time; but June was always vacation, he believed. And after all, what was he making such a fuss about? A farm was good enough. 'Twould be a strange thing if happiness must depend on the place where he might be.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE YELLOW DEED AND THE WARNING.

APRIL passed away, and Miss Cly still looked closely at Guy's face. She couldn't tell why it didn't satisfy her, but it did not; and yet it was bright and contented, and she sometimes thought he was picking up a little flesh. Still she wished the boy had more resources. Why did he never use his violin? Was it possible he was treasuring those foolish words of Roger's all this time? Or did he want lessons? She would send him into the city for them every week, if he did.

With Miss Cly to think and to act were never far apart, and Guy heard a knock at his door one evening as he was just finishing work. He knew who it was. Miss Cly's visits were not frequent, but she did step over from her own room now and then, and it always made Guy's seem doubly bright.

"Guy!" she said, after a moment; "can't you put up your books? you work too late. In fact I think it's time for another holiday."

"Not quite yet, Aunt Cly. June will do, I think.

I'll go and toss hay for you then, and get my hand in for by-and-by."

"That would be very good for you," said Miss Cly. "But you need something meantime. Where's your violin? I thought you were going to take pleasure in that."

Guy coloured violently, and then paled again; but Miss Hollowbloom understood.

"Is it possible, Guy, those hasty words of Roger's are not forgotten yet? It was only a mood he was in; a disagreeable one, to be sure, but gone long ago. He would enjoy it, if he happened to hear you now. And he is often out of the house for hours."

"I know, dear Aunt Cly, but—I'm afraid that isn't all. It was papa's, of course, and I feel—his name is never mentioned in the house, and I can't but feel—"

"Guy," said Miss Hollowbloom, "I have believed your father one of the noblest of men, since you told me more than I knew before."

"But you don't love him, you never will love him, Aunt Cly. And the others don't even feel as kindly toward him as you. You are very kind, but don't mind about the violin. Indeed I'd rather not; and I have the cabinet, you know—thanks to you. There are so many things in it that I delight to have. I had packed it full. Would you care, Aunt Cly—I had thought that some time, perhaps, you would like me to show you some things that were mamma's. You loved her, you know."

Miss Hollowbloom felt a quick pulse go through her veins. Things that had been Nelly's? Could her eyes really rest upon things that the child had used, and handled, and enjoyed in those long years when she had lost her out of sight? And yet, had she courage to look? But one glance in Guy's face decided her. It was so eager and so bright with his wish, but at the same time so calm about what was such an excitement to her. She rose quickly. "I should be very glad," she said. "It is a beautiful piece of furniture in itself. Let us look at that first."

She examined the cabinet, with its strange carving and designs, rich, delicate, beautiful, and grotesque, at once; and then Guy opened the drawers. First a work-box that had taken the place of the one left at home. Then a bracelet—how well Miss Cly remembered giving her that! Then the portfolio, inlaid in mosaic, with the sandalwood odour still there.

"That was where a letter was found that has given you a great deal of trouble, Aunt Cly," said Guy, smiling; and then he drew out more things—a necklace, a pair of gloves, then vases, pictures, and nameless articles that had given grace to a room; not many or large, but each the most delicate and the choicest of its kind. He touched each as if it were sacred, but with a quiet happiness in his face; while the dread Miss Cly had felt was forgotten in the strange trembling delight with which she feasted upon every one.

If Guy had not been there she would have caught up one after another for some excited embrace; but she stood motionless, only responding to what he said.

"Here is the secret drawer. There is nothing in it, I suppose. Papa showed me how to open it once; I think I can do it again."

It baffled him for a moment, then there was a sudden click, and it flew open. Empty, as Guy had thought, except one long, legal-looking paper, yellow with time. What was that? He thought Judge Throckmorton had taken all the papers.

He drew it out, opened it and held it before Miss Cly.

"It is a deed," she said. "Had your father any property conveyed to him, do you know?"

"No; I don't know. Judge Throckmorton said he found nothing; but of course he did not see this. But it can't be anything of value. I'm sure there was not anything."

"Send it to the judge, by all means," said Miss Cly: but her thoughts turned from it to the other things she had seen; they seemed far greater treasures than yellow deeds to her.

"This is not all," she said, as Guy hesitated. "There are more drawers."

"But those are papa's things—you would not care—O Aunt Cly, he sat just here, no, at the desk close by, when he wrote you that letter that was never

answered," Guy burst forth suddenly at last. It was the long pent-up bitterness of that one sore memory.

"The letter that never was answered? A letter that he wrote?" repeated Miss Cly, bewildered.

"Yes;—the letter that told you nothing was mamma's fault; that if you blamed any one you must blame him, and begging you to be friends with her again. She longed for it so. It was years and years ago, but there was no answer; so he could do nothing more. But I do not believe he ever did anything wrong in his life!"

Miss Cly turned and looked for a chair Guy had placed for her; she felt a strange trembling in her limbs.

"Guy," she said, "that letter that was never answered was never received. Do you think I wasn't starving for it all that time?"

Guy sent the paper off the next day. He felt sure it was of no value—nothing that his father had touched had ever come to be valuable; but still the judge ought to see it, or rather his "guardian" ought; the doctor could do as he pleased about showing it to the judge. It seemed to be a conveyance of some piece of land, and had as many "whereas's" as Roger's well-remembered papers; but the land had doubtless been sunk in an earthquake or sold for taxes before now, if it had ever been worth anything in its day.

Tom tried to get him out again the next morning.

Guy wondered why his invitations had been so frequent of late, but he was obliged to decline this time, and Tom went off alone. He had not gone far before he met a conveyance that Guy had already learned to recognize when it passed. It was a very shabby buggy, with a very fleet horse, behind which an unusually large and very important-looking personage, with a silk handkerchief round his throat, was seated. This was Dr. Pilbury, the man on whom the Bolingbrokers depended, so far as they could depend on mortal skill, for keeping soul and body together when danger came.

As he caught sight of Tom he reined up, and evidently wished Tom to do the same. A low-spoken word to Shanter was sufficient, and the doctor came abreast, and opened with a bluntness that was by no means uncommon with him.

"How are you, Hollowbloom? I see you have a tenant in that deserted castle of yours. I've been keeping an eye on him; which you may think none of my business, but I happen to know how the house was when you let that fellow who was burnt out take his family in there for a few weeks. It made two or three cases for me in that length of time. It's been leaking ever since it was shut up, and that's got the walls into a bad state, and drained a lot of poison underneath besides. You'll find standing water under there, if you examine. The leaks don't do it altogether, but the foundation is in such a state

that the hill drains under it. No harm done while he kept a fire going, but it's a different season now. And no affair of mine either, of course, but I thought you ought to know."

"Quite right, doctor; I'm much obliged. I've been meaning to send a man up there with shingles for a week. It isn't much of a place, it's true, but the fellow's taken a fancy to camping there, and I like to let him have his way. I must shape it up for him though, if it's as bad as that. I want him to be all right."

"Yes," said the doctor; "and you'll have to see about a little draining when you get your roof patched. I'm driving night and day already, and I don't want another case."

"I might drive round and see Bantling about those shingles now, I suppose," thought Tom, as the doctor drove away. "No, on the whole, I'll leave it till to-morrow. There'll be no harm done before that time. I want to stop at the farm a while just now."

But when to-morrow came, something called Tom in still a different direction, and the shingles waited for another day.

Guy had his eye on the post-office through the rest of that week; not that he had much anxiety about the deed, but anything that brought a letter from the doctor was worth just so much. The doctor would think it ridiculous to have sent the yellow thing down there, he supposed.

CHAPTER XXX.

EXPLANATION.

SEVERAL days passed, but the old postmaster handed him the letter at last. Tom was with him, so he kept it burning in his pocket till his own room was reached, and then it came out in a flash.

"MY DEAR GUY,—Why didn't you try that drawer before ?

"I had to wait a day or two for Throckmorton ; he had just come in from circuit. The deed proves to have been given to your father in payment of a debt, and to have been considered of no value by him, as indeed it was nearly worthless until a very short time before his death. Circumstances have, however, made it of altogether different importance within the last year. The property is not a fortune, but quite sufficient to cover all expenses through your college course, in case your Bolingbroke bank should fail to do so.

"*Now* will you come and make us happy, you foolish boy ? Turn about is fair play, as I told you ; and if we accept invitations as our share for this year,

undoubtedly your friends will be kind about making an exchange for the next."

Guy read the letter and laid it down; then took it up and read it a second and a third time with a sense of bewilderment. Had he read something that was not there? Wasn't he making any better work than Drake did when he got a page spread out?

But looking at it made no difference. The black and white stood there just the same. Means enough of his own to make him independent for four long, happy years! Four years, at least, to gather up knowledge that would be his for all his life!

Then there remained only the question whether Miss Cly would mind giving him up. Was it possible the doctor could arrange about that? If it would vex her, or grieve her, he would never go. But perhaps—and perhaps.

Even a "perhaps" is loophole enough for a good deal of light to come through sometimes, and Guy felt a wild tumult springing up at the very thought. He swung the doctor's letter over his head; the room didn't seem large enough to hold him. Where should he go? He must tell Aunt Cly, but not just now. She would think he had lost his senses if she saw him before he could get calmed down.

"I'd better cool off by reflecting upon the farm," he laughed, at last. "What difference is money going to make? I think Aunt Cly has her plans made for me, and her plans go pretty deep. And I believe she

feels that I take mamma's place somehow in her life. I think she doesn't want me to go away. If it really is so, and I'm almost sure it is, that settles it once more. If the doctor insists on asking the question, though, I shall have to let him, I suppose."

But by the time Guy's excitement was over, a new one had sprung up in the house. An excitement in the Hollowbloom house was a strange thing indeed; Nabby and Adam could remember two or three in their day, but Guy had felt as if even the ghost of one would be strangely out of place.

Now, however, even Miss Cly's face betrayed more disturbance than Guy had ever seen on it before. Judge Hollowbloom, the old squire's brother, and the only remaining member of the older branch of the family, was lying very ill, and had sent for Roger and Cly. There was a good deal of property at stake in some way, Guy gathered from what was said.

Not that Cly cared for that—there was enough that was safe; but she disliked business, and never went from home. Both were distasteful to her in the extreme. Now the journey seemed imperative, though Roger would have to occupy a day or two with some steps in the matter that could best be taken before he left home.

But there was still another trouble in Miss Cly's mind. She did not like leaving Guy; the house was solitary enough for the boy, at best.

"Oh, don't give it a thought," Guy said. "Uncle Tom is always jolly, and I'll keep so busy I shan't have time to think. And it will pay for all the rest to see you coming back; and perhaps I shan't seem such a plague to you after you've had a little rest."

Guy thought his own letter would be better mentioned at some other time, and set off to see Drake. The weather seemed settling down for a steady pour, and he wanted to see how the "drips" were doing. They were pattering down plainly enough on the spot where Drake's bed had always stood. He had moved it further out, but Guy thought not until it had caught a touch of the shower, to say the least.

Drake made nothing of it, though; in fact, Guy thought he seemed rather dull altogether; and after he left he found himself thinking of Drake's eyes. There was a lifeless look in them, he thought; their usual lustre was missing for the first time.

"He must be worried about the rain, after all," he thought. "I must give Uncle Tom another nudge. I hate to meddle, though. Why *can't* he, once or twice in his life, do a thing without waiting for the last gun?"

But, meddling or not, he must out with it; and out it came, as Tom lingered a moment after tea.

"It's pretty moist up at Drake's to-day, Uncle Tom. I don't know but the whole castle will float off if this pour keeps up."

"*Those shingles!*" exclaimed Tom, with a gesture

of vexation with himself. "Why couldn't I have thought of that to-day? I'll be sure to do it to-morrow, though, if Cly don't want me about this new buzz in the house. I've got a ditch, or something of the kind, to dig up there too."

But to-morrow the sun shone again; rain must be over for that week at least, and Roger wanted Tom to drive him to the county town; he must see the register of deeds.

"I might send Adam to see to the tenant-house," thought Tom, with a twinge of recollection that brought Dr. Pilbury before his eyes. "However, a day can't matter, now that the weather has cleared, and Adam's sure to blunder."

When they were fairly off, Guy made a business of finding Miss Hollowbloom. He was afraid he should seem to have been slow already in telling her what the doctor wrote.

"I've heard about the yellow old paper, Aunt Cly," he said.

"You have!" answered Miss Cly with a quick look of interest. "Have you found out what it is worth?"

"Yes; at least it is some land, I believe. The doctor did not say precisely—," and Guy hesitated.

"Ah," and Miss Cly's look changed, "I beg your pardon. I should not have asked."

"Should not have asked? Indeed you should, Aunt Cly. There was only one reason—"

"One reason is quite enough, my dear Guy. Of course, it is your own affair;" and she began to move away.

"Oh, *don't* say that," cried Guy, distressed. "Indeed, then, I *must* tell you. He wasn't definite at all; he only said it would be enough to pay my way through college, and I didn't like to speak to you of that."

"Enough to pay your way through college!" repeated Miss Cly with amazement in her eyes. "And did he suppose it necessary to look about in search of means for that?"

"No—at least—I suppose he understands—"

"And do not *you* understand? Did I not tell you once that you had a fair claim on the estate for a share of your own?"

"Yes, I know I needn't be ashamed to take what you choose to give me, but I can't expect you to pay for what you don't like."

"For what I don't like?" echoed Miss Cly again; but Guy did not seem to hear.

"Indeed I didn't mean to speak of it. I've no thought of going away. I shall be very happy—I couldn't go against your wish."

"Now, Guy," said Miss Hollowbloom, quietly taking a seat, "I think it would be an excellent thing if we were to understand each other. Will you be kind enough to tell me what my wishes are?"

It was Guy's turn now to be amazed. "Dear Aunt

Cly, did you not ask me if I would like to take the farm? Hasn't Uncle Tom said it was the place for me, over and over again? and when I asked you once if you meant it, did you not say it would be best? I thought, flattered myself, I suppose, that you wanted to keep me here. I thought you wanted one of the family to take the place. I'll do it, gladly, for your sake. I shall be quite happy. I shall learn in time."

Miss Hollowbloom sat for a moment without a word, and only her handsome eyes fixed on Guy, while as many changing expressions flitted over her face as when she was reading the letter Drake brought eight months before.

Had she got at the secret of the boy's thoughts at last? Was this the hobgoblin that had been worrying the colour out of his cheeks? Had Tom's absurd nonsense been working all this mischief that she had seen, but could not understand? Not altogether, she hoped; Guy had been working too hard, besides. But was it possible he had been ready to make such a sacrifice for her? Did he care so much for her wishes, real or imagined as they might be?

"Guy," she said, and she laughed as she still looked in his face. The laugh might have been something else if she had not been so determined, but still Miss Cly was happy, happier than she had been in many a long day. "Guy, if I have one wish that is dearer than another in the world, it is to see your life filled with whatever can make it most happy and rich.

Next to that comes the hope that more or less of it may be spent with me. But haven't you learned yet that when Tom is most ridiculous, then he means most directly the opposite of what he says? My plan for you, and the boys agree with me perfectly, is to give you every advantage in education that this country can afford; and Europe afterward, if you wish. With that, and your father's teaching, you will be ready for the best work you are capable of in life; and the happiest too, I hope. Time will have to decide what and where that shall be, but the nearer it can be to me, the more blessed will be my own. Perhaps I ought to have explained this before, but it isn't my way, I believe. If you can only keep health, Guy; that is the one thing. Indeed, I insist on your breaking off work for a while. Wouldn't you like to run down to the city again?"

The light that Guy's one "perhaps" had made loophole for was nothing compared with the wild flood of joy that came pouring in upon him now. The red dawn that had made everything glorious on that first waking in Bolingbroke seemed lighting up present and future to-day. The past was like the night that had preceded it; there had been peace and rest in that, but it was the full flush of brightest morning now.

Now he could write a letter to the doctor; now he could tell him he should have a son for the next four years.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE CASTLE INVADED.

THE next day was a busy one with Guy; for he kept up with his own work as usual, and at the same time found his assistance would be very acceptable to Miss Cly in several little matters that she wished to arrange before setting out.

"She's found one that's always ready and willing, at last; and she takes a strange kind of comfort in it, too," said Nabby with great satisfaction, unconscious that she was quoting any specially familiar words. "And it's not to be wondered at that she do, for it's something as hasn't been well known in the Hollowbloom house for many a long year."

And as it never rains but it pours, Job had watched for Guy at the Limberthornes', and told him he was ready for his start at last. If Guy would write and make arrangements, he would be telling Meg; and the squire had agreed he was to set out any day when directions came. So Guy had a letter to write, with the rest of his work.

"I'd write forty, though, with pleasure," he thought,

"if they were needed to get the old fellow off. I seem to see his eyes shining all over the page. Will Meg ever see them, too?"

As the afternoon passed, Guy glanced through the window just in time to see Drake's hat and the load on his shoulder through the boughs of the chestnut-trees.

"There he goes once more, faithful old fellow," he thought. "I must get up and see if he's dried off, to-morrow. It's a lucky thing for him that the sun's giving a fair shine at last."

As Drake went on, another figure came in sight. It was Mr. Lake, who had just caught sight of a fluttering hat-ribbon a little in advance.

"There's that poor fellow I've been thinking of so many times lately," he said. "If I can overtake him, I'll try to have a few words. If I could get him into church, that would be one step."

The overtaking was easy enough, but the few words did not meet with much encouragement, as far as church-going was concerned.

"I can't, I can't, I say!" answered Drake with an irritability altogether new. "They wouldn't let me; and I'm tired besides, I tell you. I'm tired, I say. This bag is heavy to-day. It never was so heavy before. It shall get there in time, though. Drake will never fail."

"He's a strange fellow," thought Mr. Lake, as he fell back a little and let Drake swing ahead into the

solitude he evidently preferred. "I might have found him in a better mood perhaps some other day."

The next morning saw Miss Hollowbloom turn her back on the old house at last. Roger gave Guy a friendly hand for good-bye, and they were off, Guy coming in again to wonder how he could ever have thought the rooms were large or solitary before.

"Some people don't know when they're well off," he laughed. "Never mind; I'll stick to Uncle Tom."

Tom was in his most companionable mood and sipping his last cup of coffee, having made the mistake of not being ready in time to take it with Miss Cly.

"Now," he proposed, "let us take a holiday. It will do you good. There's too much mewing up. We'll see how the other side of the mountain looks, if you'll agree, and not get back till dark."

But Guy couldn't agree. He couldn't give up the whole day, he thought. Nat wouldn't like that.

"Well, if you're obstinate, I'll go off by myself this morning, and try you again in the afternoon. Objections won't be listened to after four o'clock."

But when four o'clock came, Tom had not appeared; and Guy left a message with Adam that he had gone on to Drake's, and Tom could pick him up there. Somehow Drake's strangely lack-lustre eyes had been haunting him; he would have gone up yesterday to see if he was himself again, if the time had not been so overcrowded as it was.

But as he passed the post-office he got a spur that sent him on with a hurried step. The old postmaster was on the door-step, peering up and down the street with a bewildered expression on his face.

"That boy brought his mail-bag this morning," he said, as he nodded to Guy; "but it's seven minutes past the time when it ought to be going back, and he's nowhere to be seen. It's the first time in ten years; but if three minutes don't fetch him, I'll have to throw it into somebody's waggon and send it on."

"Something's the matter with Drake," Guy said to himself as he hurried on. "He'd never let any one touch his mail as long as he'd life to move."

He reached the shabby little house. It had never looked so picturesque before, with the old lilacs blooming in front, and the honeysuckle clambering over the door, fresh and luxuriant in its mass of new foliage in palest green. The door stood ajar, and Guy stepped in. Drake sat opposite to him on the stool he had drawn up to the fire with Guy so many times. There was a round crimson spot on each cheek; and his eyes, burning now with a more than natural light, met Guy's with a look of trouble and distress.

"I'm going," he said. "I'll get there in time. No one shall say Drake is late. But I'm tired, I say. What do they make it so heavy for? It's been too heavy now for two days. To-day I stumbled with it. But I brought it all right. And I'm going back again now. I'll be there in time."

Drake rose to his feet, took a few uncertain steps, and then, staggering, lost his footing just in time to catch Miss Cly's old chair. It was not the first attempt, either, Guy was sure from his attitude when he came in, that the old stool had served him a similar friendly turn.

"Drake," he said, "you're not well. You can't carry it again if you try. You know I'm always true to you. If you'll stay here, I'll see that it goes all right."

Drake started up with a terrified look, but this time did not even get to his feet, and began talking again about being there in time—no one should say he was late; but his talk was now all incoherent, and the look in his eyes grew more unnatural and wild.

"Drake," said Guy gently, but slowly and distinctly, "you promised me once you would do something for me, when you could. Now I want you to stay here, and let me see to your bag. Will you do this? I'll come back and tell you it's all right."

Drake gazed at him excitedly. It seemed hard to receive the idea at first, and then hard to yield, and he shook his head resolutely once or twice.

"For you?" he repeated two or three times. "Must I do it for you, do you say? I'd never do it for any one else. Do you say for you?"

"Yes, for me, Drake. I want you to lie down, and keep quiet till I come back."

Drake looked at him earnestly with his great

burning eyes, and then his face suddenly lighted again.

"I was afraid I couldn't," he said. "I was afraid I could never do anything for you. But I wanted to! I've wanted to so many times!" and reaching out his hand, he let Guy help him to his feet, and then to the bed, which still stood a little drawn from its place.

"Are you coming back, do you say? Will you come back?" he asked, catching Guy's sleeve in the old way.

"Yes, yes; I'll hardly be any time. Don't move till you see me again;" and Guy was out of the door, and down the hill on a run.

The mail was gone, as he knew it would be; but he could tell Drake, at least, that Thad Harker's waggon, a dim little speck now on the road to the station, had taken it in.

"Where's Dr. Pilbury?" asked Guy hastily. That was the next thing to think of. "Is there any one here that can send him up to Drake?"

"Drake?" echoed Jennings wonderingly. "Drake sick? Drake? Why, he hasn't been that for twenty years. He thought he did it up that time for the rest of his life."

"He's sick enough now," answered Guy, almost impatiently. "I want to get the doctor up there with no time lost."

"Well, now, that's the queer way things work. I

saw the doctor driving off on the Bassett road an hour ago, and he said 'twas a chance if he wasn't kept all night, and maybe longer. He couldn't say."

"But I must have a doctor. Isn't there some one else?"

The postmaster settled his spectacles meditatively. "I don't know who you'll get. There's Baxter, over at Gray. He was going with Pilbury to the same case. They'll be back, one or both, by morning though."

Guy hesitated. He must leave that, then, till Tom came. Tom would know what to do. But he must find some one to stay there for the night, at least.

"Who takes care of sick people here? Drake can't be left alone to-night."

The postmaster's reflections seemed still more inadequate to the demand. "Why, now, I don't really know of any one except Aunt Clapsaddle," he said at last; "and she's nursing Lorenzo's second wife. We don't have a great amount of sickness here in Bolingbroke, and there's generally some neighbour or friend. But Drake—I don't exactly know."

A sudden resolution settled the difficulty with Guy. Drake had neither neighbours nor friends. Was that what Jennings meant to say? He had one friend, certainly, and that one was ready and willing for to-night at least.

"Can I pick up any one to take a message home for me?" he asked.

"Isn't that Gorringer there at the blacksmith's shop?" answered Jennings. And looking across the street, and into the cavernous darkness of the blacksmith's shop, Guy saw the glow of the furnace, and sharp against it a pair of square shoulders that he knew.

With an exclamation of relief he crossed the street and beckoned Adam out.

"Holly's cast a shoe, sir, and I thought I'd best bring him up," said Adam, half apologetically. "I told Nabby about Mr. Tom for you. She'll have it all right if he comes while I'm away."

"Adam," said Guy, "I'm not going home to-night. Drake's sick, and I'm going to stay with him. If Mr. Tom comes, tell him where I am and how it is. Tell him the doctor's out of town, and I don't know where to get another."

Adam gazed with a look of mingled amazement and alarm. "Stay up there for the night? In the old tenant-house? I must beg pardon, sir, but it's a deserted old hole, and by no means fitting for you, not to say as Drake's queer company enough by daylight. I wouldn't dare tell Mr. Tom. And Miss Hollowbloom! she'd never forgive us; and the rest of us could never sleep a wink."

Guy wrote a few lines in his memorandum-book, and tore out the leaf. "Give this to Mr. Tom, Adam; that's all you have to do. You're very kind, but it's nothing to stay up there. I'll take Troy along;" for

the dog had darted from under Holly's feet and was fawning upon Guy. "He'll be good company, and Drake has everything I shall need. Mr. Tom's at home by this time, probably;" and he hurried away.

Adam's eyes followed him with a look of helpless despair, while he stood mumbling unintelligible remonstrances that there was no one to heed.

"That'll settle it, though," he exclaimed with immense relief as he glanced at the note in his hand. "Mr. Tom'll have him home again before the twilight fairly sets in."

But when twilight had set in Guy, was still watching alone beside Drake. No shadow of Tom had appeared, and Guy drew the curtain and lighted Drake's lamp sooner than there was positive need. Somehow the "gloaming" hadn't altogether a pleasant feeling in the old tenant-house, especially with Drake's eyes burning at him through it, and his rambling talk continually falling on his ear.

Sometimes he lifted his head and looked eagerly over toward Guy. "Are you there? It seems strange to have any one but the Friend," he said; and then falling back with a pleased look of content, he repeated in a lower and lower tone, "I did it for you, you know. I'd never have done it for any one but you."

"If I only had something to give him," thought Guy. "If I only knew what to do. But Uncle Tom will be here before long; it can't be much later;" and

Guy put more water to Drake's eager lips. That was the only medicine at hand.

But the darkness grew thicker, and evening was settling into night, and still no one came. Troy, lying at his feet and pricking an ear now this way and now that, was the only sharer of his watch. Tom must have gone for the doctor. Guy seized upon that sudden thought, and held on to it as long as he could; but he turned the rusty lock of the door and shaded the light while he waited. He wondered how Drake ever stayed in this dismal place.

But Drake fell into a restless sleep at last, and Guy got the old rocking-chair tilted back, found Drake's winter overcoat for a wrap, and settled to use his chance for a snatch of rest. Stillness reigned, and before Guy was aware, sleep had stolen on him as well as on his patient. He woke with a start, and looked at his watch. Two o'clock! What had become of Tom?

Drake raised his head and began talking again. "Are you there?" he asked, and the pleased smile showed even through the dim light of the room. Guy gave him fresh water, and he lay down with eyes heavy again with sleep. By snatches of this kind the night wore away, though the sick man's sleep was restless, and moans or rapid talking broke it now and then.

CHAPTER XXXII.

STANDING BY.

DAWN broke at last, and Guy pushed back the curtain he had drawn with such a strange feeling the night before. "I think I'll let it stay now," he said with a half-laugh. "I don't believe any one's ever coming near the house again. I wonder what the chances are for either of us having anything to eat. Drake's got to have something before long. What do they give people with fevers, to keep them up?"

He began a search, which did not promise very well for his patient, whatever it might do for himself, when suddenly his ear caught a sound. Tom was coming. There was a footstep outside.

He unlocked the door noiselessly. Did ever the outside air come with such a delicious breath? He caught a long deep draught even before he saw who was there. It was Adam, with a bit of paper and a basket in his hand. Poor Adam! he had evidently been passing a far more uncomfortable night than Guy.

"Thank goodness," he exclaimed, "you're alive,

sir, and not a hair of your head carried away. Indeed I'd have come back, and never left you to bear it out alone, if Nabby hadn't got that frightened and spooky she couldn't by any means in life let me leave her in the house by herself. I'm not that bad, sir, as I hope Mr. Tom'll believe; and I've brought you a note from him, too. I'd have got it up last night if I could. And Nabby sends her duty, and begs, for the sake of us all, you'll come home. She's sent you a bit of breakfast, not to bring an empty stomach into the air; and then, sir, indeed, if you can think of the right as we do, you'll come home. Miss Hollowbloom will put the whole burden of it on us, if you don't."

"Why, Adam, what do you think is going to happen to me here?" said Guy kindly; and he took Tom's note from his hand. It was rather strange. He had thought his uncle would come himself. But the note wasn't dated Bolingbroke; it was from Gray, ten miles away.

"You're a forgiving old fellow," it said, "and will let me off on the drive this afternoon, I know, as I really couldn't get back at the hour. But now I've just met an old friend who wants me to go on a shooting tramp for perhaps a day or two. I'm afraid it's a shabby trick, to drop off when Roger and Cly are away; but you'll have Ajax and Agamemnon and the rest to make merry with, and I'll be back before I'm really missed. Tell Adam to look out for

you, and to have Shanter's crib widened while I'm gone."

"When did you get this?" asked Guy suddenly, turning to Adam again.

"Mr. Tom sent it by private hand; indeed, sir, it came very late, or I'd have got it up."

"Adam, Mr. Tom's not coming home."

Adam nodded with a woful look. The messenger had told him, and pulled the very ground from under his feet by doing so. Mr. Tom would have had the boy at the house in an hour. But what were he and Nabby ever going to do?

"Now, Adam, listen. You're the only one I can depend on, and you must help me through. I want you to stop and tell Jennings to send up a doctor the moment he can lay hands on one—Pilbury or anybody else. Then I want you to go to the professor, and tell him I ask to be excused for the rest of the week. Then go home and tell Nabby to send me whatever's good for a fever—Drake's burning up with one; and to send me whatever I ought to eat myself. If she'll encourage me in that trying duty, Miss Cly may be highly pleased with my appearance when she returns;" and Guy laughed reassuringly.

But Adam couldn't laugh. His face was, if possible, longer than before, as he saw the drift of Guy's words.

"Then you'll not be coming home?" he said despairingly.

"Not till I see the doctor, at least. Why, man,

where could I be better? I didn't see a single banshee last night, and there's no prettier place in town by day. Now go, and get back as soon as possible. Better come up on Holly. I've nothing to give Drake at all."

There was nothing for it but to obey, and Adam was turning reluctantly away, when he suddenly thrust his hand into his pocket.

"Here's another letter, sir. I was near forgetting it. Jennings gave it to me as I came by."

Guy opened it. He hadn't thought the doctor would answer so soon.

"Let your friend with the long-suffering name come down at once; go straight to Lesseps, and say I sent him. Lesseps will see to the case; and if he wants the girl to stay, he'll fix everything. I'll see them too, if it will do any good."

Guy wrote Dr. Holt's and Dr. Lesseps' address on the back of the envelope and handed the letter to Adam.

"When you're at the Limberthornes', find Hard-luck and give him this. Tell him to do as it says, and let him know why I can't see him off; and remember, I need you back in haste."

Adam went, and Guy re-entered noiselessly. Drake had waked, and met him eagerly with his eyes. "I'll be there in time," he said restlessly. "Did you tell them I'll be there in time?"

The hour seemed two before Adam returned, but

he was there at last. Miss Cly was skilled in the sickroom, and half as much doctor as nurse, and Nabby had had thorough experience with her, so that Adam's basket this time brought help that Guy seized with immense relief—powerful drops to bring down the pulse, cooling draughts, and a can of morning's milk.

"You're to give him the milk without stint, sir, and it'll keep up his strength," Adam said. "And I'm to bring your dinner at noon, as your breakfast was so early; and you'll take tea at home, we're altogether in hope. There's others than you to come in here before then;" and Adam looked round with ill-concealed disgust.

"We'll see, Adam," said Guy; "and thank you with all my heart. A friend in need is a friend indeed, you know, and I shall remember this. Come on Holly again at noon. If there's no doctor by that time, I shall ride off for one, if it's twenty miles."

But by that time no one had come, and Guy took Nabby's dinner-basket hastily from Adam's hand. "Just tie Holly while I do my duty to this, and then I want you to stay here while I go. Drake wants very little, and indeed heeds very little, I'm afraid."

Adam came in with a reluctant step. "I won't say that where the young master can go isn't good enough for me," he was saying to himself; "but I

will say I'd rather stay by and help him through than be left in this place alone."

There seemed nothing for it, however; Guy was soon making his preparations to go. But at his first movement Drake's eyes caught him with a frightened look.

"*You* are not going?" he said. "I didn't think *you* would go."

"I'll be back, Drake," said Guy; but it was of no use. Drake struggled to rise, and began his old gestures, with an appeal in his pitiful "No, no, no!" that seemed impossible to resist.

"Do look, Adam, and see if there's no one coming yet," Guy said; and at that moment there was the sound of wheels, then a step at the door, and Dr. Pilbury's great shoulders and heavy face came in. He nodded to Adam, and looked keenly at Guy.

"You're the young Hollowbloom, I see;" and he ungloved and held out his hand. "What's the matter here?"

But he did not wait for an answer; his eyes were used to searches, and he stepped to the side of the bed. Drake knew him well, and he quieted him with a word, and made a quick examination. Then he turned to Guy with an angry knitting between his brows.

"Where's that Tom Hollowbloom?" he said.

The doctor did not stay long; he was used to quick work; but as he went out he beckoned Guy to follow.

"That's a very sick boy. Who's taking care of him?"

"I am, at present."

"*You!*" and the doctor ran his eye quickly over Guy from head to foot. "How did that come to be your business?"

"Because it was no one's else. But I know I'm not experienced enough. I was waiting for you."

"Humph!" said the doctor, and he muttered something about Tom again. "You'd better go home. I'll send a man down. From what I hear, the Hollowblooms might object to your studying a case of typhus.—Now as to remedies, till my man comes;" and the doctor began writing out clear directions, which he handed to Guy with the medicines required.

"I'll be here again to-day. Keep your patient as quiet as you can till then."

When Guy got in again, Drake was already struggling with Adam to go in search of him; but he lay down instantly with a quick change of expression, that made his face look like a pleased child's; only there was more eagerness than a child's could hold as he stretched out a hand to Guy.

"Now, Adam," said Guy, "I want you to go down to the house. There's an army cot there somewhere; Nabby'll know where. I want you to bring it up; and tell her to send everything it needs to make it comfortable."

Adam's hair seemed almost to bristle, and his eyes

opened round with vexation and dismay. "Not that you mean to say you're preparing to stay in this place another night, or more nights than one? Indeed, sir, I shall find it in my duty to let Miss Hollowbloom know."

"Adam, I forbid you to do anything of the kind. Miss Hollowbloom would wish me just where I am, if she were here, but she mustn't be worried where she is. Bring up the things—that's a good fellow. The doctor's going to send a nurse, and I'll go home if I can; but the man must have something, at least."

Adam brought the things with the best grace he could muster, and stayed by with an uneasy face till the doctor came. There were two treads this time instead of one, and Guy stepped outside again.

"I've brought your man, Hollowbloom. Barker's used to everything. He'll see it through; and all you've got to do is to go home and stay there. You've been here too long already. In fact, I want to get Drake out of this, if there's a place to send him."

But a word dropped to that effect in the room raised such excitement in the patient, and such eager gestures and appeals to Guy, that the doctor said no more.

"He'll have to take his chance then," he muttered to himself. "These fellows don't bear crossing. He may as well die of poison as of excited pulse;" and with renewed charges to his man he went away.

But Guy's going was another thing. Drake kept his brilliant eyes on him with a fixedness that grew painful to bear, and the least sign of his going brought the old excitement and distress again.

"Why shouldn't I stay?" whispered Guy at last. "I don't know what everybody's sending me home for. I can rest here well enough."

Barker looked at him with a curious eye. What did a fellow like him care for this poor fool?

"If you're going to stay," he said, with his quick nasal twang, as he concluded his gaze, "you can use that concern your man set up, for all me; if I shan't rub the flowers off that there covered chair, it's all I shall want. I do my sleeping some other time than when I go out to nurse."

Guy stood with folded arms and looked at Drake. Why did the doctor want him to go home? Did he think he would get sick? There was no danger. He wasn't even tired yet. And if he should be—if he should be even more than that—what then, if Drake wanted him!

He went up to the bed and moistened the sick man's lips. "Never fear, Drake; I'll stay with you," he said.

Drake broke into a low, glad laugh, and beckoned Guy to stoop.

"Do you see the Friend?" he said. "He's here. I can see him well. *He* won't leave me. But I want you too."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

“THE MASTER COMETH.”

THERE was no sleep that night for Drake. Guy went off to the cot, for a strange feeling of fatigue suddenly forced him down; but all night long Drake's eyes were wide open, and Barker listened curiously to the varying sounds from his bed. Sometimes he moaned pitifully, like a child; then ease seemed to come, and he hummed low tunes or laughed happily to himself. Then he talked rapidly in half-audible tones, in which Guy recognized, as Barker could not, snatches of what they had read together; and then he would suddenly cry, “Hush! Do you see the Friend? Hosanna! Blessed be the King!” Then would come another murmur of pleased sounds, and then quiet for a little time.

THERE was hardly more sleep for Guy. Drake never once asked for him again, satisfied that he was there; but it was only toward morning, when Drake grew quiet, and exhaustion helped Guy to turn a deaf ear, that he fell into a heavy, restful sleep. When he waked it was broad daylight, but Drake

himself was sleeping at last. Adam appeared again, with breakfast enough for both watchers; but indeed, he said, Nabby bid him say she was not expecting to send anything more, as the doctor himself had said Mr. Guy was to come home.

The air came upon Guy's face with the same delicious refreshment as the morning before. He hesitated and looked round at Drake. He was in a heavy slumber, and, Barker said, was likely to remain so for an hour.

"Wait for me here, Adam. I'll have a gallop on Holly, and you shall take him again when I come back." He sprang into the saddle, and they were off. Why need every one keep in such a worry about his giving poor Drake a little lift? Of course he ought not to get really overdone, and give Aunt Cly a patient to nurse herself, when she got home; but there couldn't be any danger. If they only knew how he felt, every vein glowing with fresh life in this superb morning air. But what had ever got Drake down like this? he wondered. And how strangely he seemed to hold on to him! If Guy had only himself to consider, no one would ever send him home till he saw the poor fellow through. What thought would he have about danger, so long as Drake was giving him such looks out of those eyes?

Adam heard the clatter of hoofs as Guy came back, and stood waiting outside the door.

"The doctor's been in again, sir, and he says it's an ugly case. I told him we were to have no more of your staying here, and he said that was right; and I was to tell you he didn't wish to see you in the house again," said Adam with a triumphant face.

Guy sprung off and threw him the rein. "All right, Adam. You go on with Holly, and tell Nabby she may get dinner for me at home. I'll come as soon as Drake's awake. I've promised him, so I'll have to get leave."

Adam went off half-satisfied, but muttering thanks that there was to be but an hour more of it at most. Would Mr. Tom never come home?

But Drake did not wake.

"The fever and the medicine's too much for him," Barker said. "There's no use in you waiting. I've seen too many of them. When he does rouse up, he won't know you from Adam;" and Barker laughed in his sleeve at his hit upon the name.

"You'd better get away from this," he went on, as Guy hesitated. "I tell you it's no use, and you're ordered off. Look in again toward night if you want to; he may know the difference then."

Guy left reluctantly, but as he went down the hill he wished he had kept Holly; he did not know he was so wretchedly tired, after all. The exhilaration of the morning ride was gone, and he found himself dropped a good deal lower than he thought.

There was no sign of Tom yet, but how delightful

the old house seemed, empty though it was. Was it possible he had ever wished for anything pleasanter than this? Luxurious it looked now, in every corner, and even the atmosphere delicious to breathe. Nabby and Adam hung about as if guarding a prisoner who they feared would escape; but Guy laughed and told them he was going to bed soon.

"I must write to the doctor now," he thought as he closed the door. "I haven't seen the moment yet when I could tell him such news as I have to give. Life seemed so strange—as if shadows were all thrown behind, and only a broad clear sunshine lying ahead!"

Nabby's dinner was delicious, and a nap on Miss Cly's sofa still more so, and then Guy got up and shook himself, and said he was the most selfish fellow in the world. Drake must be awake and asking for him before now.

"Now, Adam, don't say a word. I'm just going to ride up and ask how the poor fellow is. I needn't even go in, perhaps."

Drake was awake, and a swift gleam of pleasure lighted up his face as he saw Guy.

"I knew you'd stay," he said with a smile that went to Guy's heart. "And the Friend! he's never left me yet."

But the next moment his eyes were wandering as if he only saw what was far off, and he began humming the old tunes again. Guy stood for an instant

listening, when there was a heavy though noiseless tread at the door, and Dr. Pilbury's mighty form came in. As his eye fell upon Guy it lighted with a flash of anger.

"What are you doing here once more?" he exclaimed excitedly. "I tell you, you're to keep out of this hole! If I find you here again I'll—"

He suddenly quieted his tone and stepped closer to Guy. "Really, Mr. Hollowbloom, you must understand this thing. You are exposing yourself here. And you can do no good. I should be very sorry to interfere more positively, but I understand your friends are away, and—"

"Don't trouble yourself, doctor. You are very kind, and I shall have to go if you say so. I'd much rather stay by Drake, and I would stay if there were no one else. But since Barker's here I know I've no right."

"No right at all. Not the least right in the world. They don't want a fever patient down at the Hollowbloom House. Barker's as tough as a seasoned alligator. He'll do everything. If you want to come and inquire once a day, all right, but that's enough."

As Guy left the house, he heard a flurry of wheels; that was Shanter, stirring the dust down the road. He couldn't mistake him, and the next moment Tom was whirling up with an excited face.

"In with you here, youngster!" he said. "Never

mind Holly. Adam will look after him. What in the name of madness have you been about?"

Guy had three guardians now, instead of two. Tom never left the house, and seemed to be watching Guy like a hawk.

"Confound those shingles!" he said to himself a hundred times, as a miserable sense of responsibility clung about him. "When Drake gets well he shall clear out of there, and I'll burn the old den down. If this boy here only keeps all right till Cly gets back! Didn't he know better than to go up there?"

He drove Guy up again, however, before tea; he couldn't refuse to let the boy go and ask after Drake, but he'd be sure of getting him home. Besides, he wanted to see the poor fellow himself. Perhaps there was something that might be supplied.

Drake stretched out his hand with an eager smile as Guy came in. "I knew you'd stay!" he said. "But I'm tired, I say. I say I'm tired."

"That's the niggest he's come to anything rational since you left," Barker said. "He won't know the difference when you're gone."

"But don't you want some one here with you?" asked Tom, looking lugubriously round the room.

Barker laughed. "If 'twas the graveyard 'twould be all the same to me. I'm used to it. And it won't last long, besides."

What did he mean? Neither Tom nor Guy would ask, but Tom dragged Guy away.

It was later still the next day when they came up. Evening had set in, and Barker had a light shaded in the room. Guy had had all he could do to persuade Tom to let him come at all.

"You're not fit to meddle with the thing any more," he had said when Guy begged. "You've run yourself out already. What have you eaten to-day? And I haven't seen you loaf as much in all the time you've been in the house."

"You haven't come any too soon," Barker whispered as they entered; "and he's been asking for you, too. You might as well speak to him if you want to, for he'll be hearing other voices than yours by another day."

"Uncle Tom, why didn't you let me come?" cried Guy, and he stepped to the bed.

"Drake," he said softly.

Drake's eyes were burning with their far-off look, but they came back with a swift gleam for Guy.

"I knew you'd stay," he said, as he tried to kiss Guy's hand; but the next moment he was away again.

"I tell you," whispered Barker again, "he sees what we don't see; and he'll be where we can't follow before long."

At that instant Drake's voice broke in, clear and low. "Hush! Do you see the Friend? He's never left me once!"

"He doesn't know you've been away," whispered Tom; but Guy shook his head.

"It's not me he's talking of. But, Uncle Tom, you must let me stay now!" They sat down and listened. Drake was chanting a cadence, in a low, pure tone. How many Sunday afternoons Guy had heard him sing that.

An hour passed away, as so many had passed before, with sometimes low moans of pain, sometimes swift talking, and at last silence through the room.

Suddenly they all started with a thrill. Drake's clear rich voice had broken the silence with a ring of triumphant joy. "Hosanna! Blessed be the King!"

The echo rang through the low room; no one breathed a word, and the silence gathered again, doubly still.

But it did not last long. It was broken again by a low murmuring from Drake. "The King shall be his Friend. The King, I say. The King shall be—his Friend!"

They waited again. Drake was growing restless; it was a restlessness painful to behold.

Suddenly there was another cry. It had the old triumphant ring, clear and high, and the weak arms of the sick man tried to raise themselves over his head.

"The Master is come, and calleth for thee! *And calleth for thee!*" There was the same restless tossing for the next half-hour, mingled with short,

quickly spoken sentences, farther and farther apart. Again and again came the exciting cry, "The Master is come—and calleth for thee!" And then followed eagerly, "I'll be there in time. No one shall say I am late."

"Where did he learn all these things?" whispered Tom; but Drake was moaning restlessly again.

Guy stood close by, and as often as the absent eyes turned to him, they came back with a satisfied gleam.

But at last came one more low, ringing cry, half triumphant, half pitiful, and reaching out for rest—

"Behold, thy King cometh unto thee!
To set at liberty them that are bruised!"

"Come away," whispered Tom, dragging at Guy; "I tell you it's no use."

"No," answered Barker, no longer whispering; "he's set at liberty, sure enough."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

ALARM IN THE HOLLOWBLOOM HOUSE.

THERE was only one more day of solitude in the Hollowbloom house; on the second, Roger and Miss Cly returned, and Guy met Miss Cly with a face that repaid her tenfold for the annoyance of having had to go. Was the boy as glad as that to see her again?

"Now," said Guy laughing, "this is positively the last time. If you go off again, Aunt Cly, the house and all belonging to it will have to go too."

"She won't go off again to leave that youngster on my hands," muttered Tom, who had been hanging about miserably for the last two days. He couldn't get Dr. Pilbury and a talk about shingles out of his mind; and he kept watch of Guy with an uneasy eye. Something about the boy's looks didn't seem just right; was he mad, to stay two nights with a sick man in that old den?

Miss Cly listened to the story of Drake with moisture springing to her eyes, and a vision of a figure at the west-side door, with a trumpet-flower in one hand, and a letter with a large seal held tightly in

the other. Roger looked savagely round for Tom, but he had slipped out of sight. "I told him I washed my hands of the business," he muttered between his teeth.

Guy meant to make up for lost time with Nat the next few days, but when the first had passed he seemed making no headway at all.

"I don't see what's the matter," he said at last; "this thing won't go at all."

Miss Cly looked at him with a quick, searching gaze. "You didn't stay up there with poor Drake too much, I hope?"

"Oh no, I think not; only two nights and a day or two."

Miss Cly's face turned white with horror and dismay. "Two nights and a day or two! Why did no one tell me before? Was Tom wild, to let you do such a thing?"

"Tom wasn't here, Aunt Cly. He dragged me home the moment he came, and the doctor pushed, so there was nothing for it but to leave. But the poor old fellow wanted me so;—at first there was no one else. I couldn't get nurse or doctor, friend or foe to look in till the second day. I was a little sleepy when I got home, but that is gone long ago. But my head seems to ache, yesterday and to-day."

"I shall send for Dr. Pilbury at once," said Miss Cly in more excitement than Guy had ever seen her show, and remonstrances were in vain. But Dr. Pil-

bury was away on counsel, and Miss Cly hated "the Bassett man," and did not believe in him either; so an order was left for an immediate call, on the doctor's return.

The doctor came back late the next day, his horse jaded with his hurry home; but he found the order, and stamped his foot as he read the name.

"I knew it! Barker told me the fellow was there a second night. And the first one was enough to do the work. If I'd picked him up and locked him into the Hollowbloom house, 'twould have been the thing."

The jaded horse was turned about and headed for a fresh start, and Miss Cly gave an exclamation of thankfulness as she saw the travel-splashed buggy drive into the yard. Guy was already lying on the sofa with blazing cheeks, and, Miss Cly thought, flighty in his replies to what she said. It was only his head, he said—such a strange pain in his head; but his pulse was like a rope, and bounding two beats to one.

Dr. Pilbury was not a man to mince matters, or to choose his words as carefully as he did his medicines. What he thought it not best to tell he kept to himself, but what he told at all was easily understood.

"I'll do the best I can for this boy of yours," he said, as he stood ready to take his horse. "He's a fine fellow, from what I hear; and I've seen enough myself. I'll tide him through if it's in my power;

but he's got the poison well absorbed. It's an unlucky thing he ever found his way to that poor fool, though 'twas a noble one to stand by when he did find him. You'll have that consolation, whatever comes; but 'twas like taking a diamond to smooth down an old shoe."

Miss Hollowbloom came back with a cold, leaden feeling in her veins, and her heart was standing so still that her breath seemed gone. But she spoke to Guy with a cheerful tone. He had better get up to his own room, she said; he would be more comfortable there.

"My own room?" answered Guy, with a hazy look in his eyes. "The things were all taken out of it long ago. The doctor put them into one of his. I am to have them again when I go."

Tom came in and got an arm round him, and led him up; and then began the old, old story of drawn blinds, noiseless steps, breathless watching, and waiting with hearts torn between hope and the agony of dull, slow suspense.

"Has the boy been quite himself of late?" Dr. Pilbury asked—"up to his usual tone?"

And Miss Cly remembered with a quick pang how she had been watching him with the thought that he needed rest. If she had only sent him to the city when she left home! Dr. Pilbury gave a low "Humph!" when Miss Cly told him, and the watching and waiting went on.

Guy still looked at them with eyes sometimes dull,

sometimes burning, as Drake's had done, with unnatural light, but always seeming to see what was far away rather than that which was near. But he liked best to take everything from Miss Cly's hand; and it never trembled, and her voice never fell from its clear, brave tone. Only once, when he looked up as she brought him something, and said, "Dear Aunt Cly!" the glass almost dropped from her hold, and she turned hastily away, and no one saw her again for a little time.

Tom had not left the house for more than an hour together through these miserable days—either he or Roger was always inside the chamber door; and whenever Miss Cly could be persuaded to leave the room for a moment, one of them took her place with a softening in the face that was strange to see in such strong men. And Roger's had grown suddenly as tender as Tom's; there was no difference to be seen.

Guy had been talking incoherently so much that they had ceased to ask themselves what he meant, but at last they heard so many times over, "The doctor! Where is the doctor? I want to see him;" and the words were repeated so pleadingly while Dr. Pilbury's great shoulders and strong, earnest face were in plain sight, that they all looked at each other as if asking what was meant.

"Has the boy any friends at a distance?" Dr. Pilbury asked, and Miss Cly turned with a start. She had thought of him as her own for so long; and

those people whom he had left, what was their love for him compared with hers?

"He means Dr. Holt," said Roger suddenly; and Miss Cly saw it all now. Guy had been very fond of him; she had seen that. And there was no higher advice in the city.

"Go for him, Roger," she said. "There is a train in half an hour. You can bring him back this afternoon." And as Miss Cly sent Roger away she smothered a quick pang of jealousy that rose in her heart. Did Guy love this man better than he did her? Perhaps he loved Guy too; how could he help it? No matter! He would be all the more likely to help; and Guy should see him, even though she were never to get a look from the boy again—those looks that were a hundredfold more precious than ever now!

There was hardly a word spoken in the kitchen from morning till night. Nabby hunted up all sorts of extraordinary work, and pushed through it with a vigour that was determined to kill thoughts, if it could; and Adam could not work at all, and only hung miserably about within sight of the windows of Guy's room; but when they were together neither would speak. There was nothing to speak of but the one terror that was stupifying them both, and that they would rather let alone. And in the village little knots of men gathered and asked what was the news from the Hollowbloom house; that was a rare boy they had down there.

CHAPTER XXXV.

ALMOST LOST.

THE return train from the city came at last, and Adam held Holly at the platform, with a vague feeling that hope might have come with it, but he was not sure. But was that the new doctor Mr. Roger had brought? Had young Mr. Guy friends like that, to be called?

Adam had never seen any one who gave him such a sense that there were superior beings on earth of whom he had never dreamed.

But the new doctor's mouth was tightly compressed, and neither he nor Roger spoke a word as they took their seats. Adam gave Holly his head, and with a word from Roger he lowered it and swung up the hill at a pace that withdrew them from Adam's sight before he had collected himself and taken a step.

Miss Cly met them as they entered the door. She saw what Adam had seen, at the first glance. It was not as strange to her, but still it was not often in a lifetime that one could behold such a specimen of all that perfect and elegant manhood could be. And

this was the man whom Guy loved. And the man who had loved Guy's father, too.

"Will you go in alone?" she asked, after the first few words were exchanged. "He is expecting you."

She would stay behind. She did not wish to see.

And it was well, perhaps, that she did not. Guy opened his eyes at the doctor's step, and fixed them on him an instant as he came near; then, with a long, low cry of joy, he stretched out his weak arms. The doctor took him in his own, lifted him gently and held him without a sound; then laid him down at last with a few soothing words.

"Now you see how Drake wanted me," Guy said. "Are you not glad I went?"

When Miss Cly came in half an hour later, Guy was asleep with the doctor's hand fast in his; it was the quietest sleep he had had for all these long days. Then Dr. Pilbury's wheels were heard, and Dr. Holt drew noiselessly away and left the room to meet the Bolingbroke physician.

There was a rapid but full discussion of the case; at the end of which Dr. Pilbury said bluntly, "You are personally interested in the patient, I believe?"

Dr. Holt turned hastily away for an instant, and then coming back, fixed his eyes on the round blue ones waiting for them. "I was building part of my life on him," he said.

Dr. Holt would not leave Guy that night, and Miss Cly would not go either, so they watched together

through the long hours, both silently feeling that they were finding each other out as the moments passed.

Was this man, who had almost everything a man could have to make life rich,—was he bending over Guy, with no thought or care but to save him, and that care as sharp an agony to him as it was to her?

Then came the thought at last, if he loved Guy so, why should not that draw them together, instead of thrusting them apart? Could the boy have too much love? And from that moment Miss Cly's bitterness was gone; and she watched the doctor and worked with him without a word, with a close sympathy, and a thankful trust that no human skill could do more than his.

As the first break of dawn tinged the sky, before daylight had really broken, Miss Cly turned her head and listened. There was a step under the window; she had thought so before, but she felt sure of it now—only a little movement, as if some one were standing there, without meaning to go. She stepped to it and looked out, then slipped downstairs and unfastened the door. It was Nat Limberthorne. He had hardly been seen off the Limberthorne grounds for years, but he was waiting now to see if he could get news. The squire would come and ask after breakfast, as he had done every day; but Nat could not wait for that this time.

As the day progressed, the doctor saw signs that

no other eye could catch. "There will be a change of some kind before night," he said. And when twilight came, Guy was lying with eyes perfectly clear once more.

He held out a hand with a glad smile. "You have not left me yet," he said. "I am so glad. I have been very sick, have I not?"

He read his answer in the doctor's eyes, and fixed his own on them with a clear look. "Am I going to die?" he asked.

"To die! Do you think I would let you do that?" answered the doctor hastily.

Guy closed his eyes and lay without the quiver of a lid. *To die? Now!* Just as life was opening before him with such a glad, bright dawn? If death had come in those first dreary months, when his heart seemed stifling under what it could hardly bear. But *now!* Could he go *now?*

"Do you think I would let you?" Was that what the doctor asked? Ah, but he could not keep him; he would have told him if he could.

But then—what would it be? He lay motionless still. Thinking seemed very slow; but he must try.

The *Wonderful One!* He should see *him!* he should hear his voice at last! And would not He find him a work to do there as well as here? And O papa, papa!—should he find *him* again?

But the rest. Must he leave all the rest?

But if *the Master had come, and were calling for him!*

The stillness was so long, they thought he was asleep; but he opened his eyes again, and met the doctor's with a slow smile.

"I am ready," he said; "and—and willing too!"

He looked round for Cly, and drew her to him.

"Kiss me, dear, *dear* Aunt Cly," he said.

She stooped and touched him with a pressure that was passionate in the depths of her soul, though it must be controlled upon her lips.

"Is Uncle Roger there?" he said. "I wish Uncle Roger would give me a hand."

Roger stepped forward, his strong frame shaking with emotion from head to foot. "Oh, forgive me for a thousand things," he said, as he grasped the white hand held out; and then he hurried from the room with great strides.

Outside the door he stumbled over some one. It was Nabby, waiting there with a grief-stricken face. Adam was sitting in her rocking-chair in the kitchen, his hands hanging idly at his sides, and his eyes fixed on the door through which she might come back with news.

"Where is Uncle Tom?" Guy asked; but Tom could not have come for his life. He was sitting behind a screen, with self-control altogether gone.

"Uncle Tom will see you another time," said the doctor gently; and Guy smiled again.

"Now give me *your* hand," he said. "I think I'll sleep a little now." And with the doctor's hand tenderly holding his, Guy's eyes closed again.

The sleep had come, but what would the waking be? It was for *that* they waited with hushed breath.

An hour passed. The sleep was like an infant's, and the doctor motioned them to go and rest. He would wait alone. Another hour, and another half-hour still, and Guy stirred at last. His eyes unclosed; the doctor looked into them and touched his pulse.

"Guy dear," he said, with a tremor under his voice, "you have had a good rest. I don't think you will worry us any more."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

SURPRISES.

WITH convalescence came peaceful hours that almost made reparation for some of the bitterer ones gone by. Rest and quiet; smiles and joyful hearts; flowers, bits of sunlight, delicious sleep, and dainty dishes with never such exquisite flavour before. There is waiting still; but when each day brings its hope fulfilled, the next does not seem far away. Guy's doctors said they had never had a better patient to help up; but Dr. Pilbury muttered to himself, "That's a wonderful man, that Dr. Holt. I never could have brought the boy through without him at the last." And yet he knew that he himself was looked upon by the profession for twenty miles around as the best counsel they could summon within reach.

For a few days Dr. Holt came out every day, taking the next train back within an hour; then he came twice a week, and then threatened not to come at all—a threat which made others besides Guy feel that through its fulfilment much would be lost.

"But how did you ever manage to stay with me so long, that dreadful time? I remember wondering, when I could not speak to say so. But if you knew how delicious it was! I don't believe I should ever have pulled through if it hadn't been for that."

The doctor looked at him with a smile that Guy read very well. It told that he felt himself a rich man once more.

"I should have stayed with *you*, Guy, if all the world had been waiting at the door. And when are you coming to stay with *me*? I hadn't time to answer such a letter as that of yours before you were sick, but I thought such good news would keep."

"Is it settled?" Guy asked. "Is Aunt Cly willing to give me up to you?—for part of the time—only part of the time, remember."

"Of course she is. To whom would she rather give you up? But here she comes to answer for herself. Good-bye!" and the doctor was gone.

Cly came in and drew a seat close beside Guy's easy-chair.

"He has told me all about it—*all*, Guy. And now there is one promise that I want you to make me. Never again, so long as I live, keep secret from me any wish or any trouble of your heart. I had found out one mistake you had made before; but when that was set right, when I had told you that I wanted you

to go away, where do you think I could so joyfully send you as to him?"

The doctor had threatened that the next visit should be the last, and Cly had prepared a surprise for him when he should come. Guy was to be downstairs, his "big doctor," as he called Dr. Pilbury, having given full consent. Roger insisted upon being the one to see him safely down, though Tom growled about it in a jealous way.

No prince ever counted hoverers about him more anxious to do his pleasure; but Guy only laughed and asked if he might have a book. But he wasn't allowed to keep it long. Nabby came with her very daintiest lunch; and then Tom with pillows and afghans, and Guy was to have a nap. When it was over the doctor would have come.

When he waked he looked about to see if Tom's promise had come true. Who was that standing there and looking at him with such wonderful eyes? Not the doctor; it was a face he had seen somewhere once before. The eyes were very beautiful, and shining with a hundred thoughts. It was Meg! And she was looking to see what his face was like—*his* face, "the young Hollowbloom's," who had been "ready" and "willing" to think for her.

They had been preparing a surprise for Guy as well as for Dr. Holt.





